NEW FROM THE MAKERS OF CLASSIC ROCK

the DOORS

THE MUSIC THE MYTH THE MADNESS

THE STORY OF ROCK'S GREATEST BAND

132 PAGES

JIM MORRISON
THE LIFE AND DEATH OF A LEGEND

THE ALBUMS
FROM THE DOORS TO L.A. WOMAN: THE STORIES BEHIND THE MUSIC

+

MORRISON & MANZAREK REMEMBERED

KRIEGER & DENSMORE SPEAK

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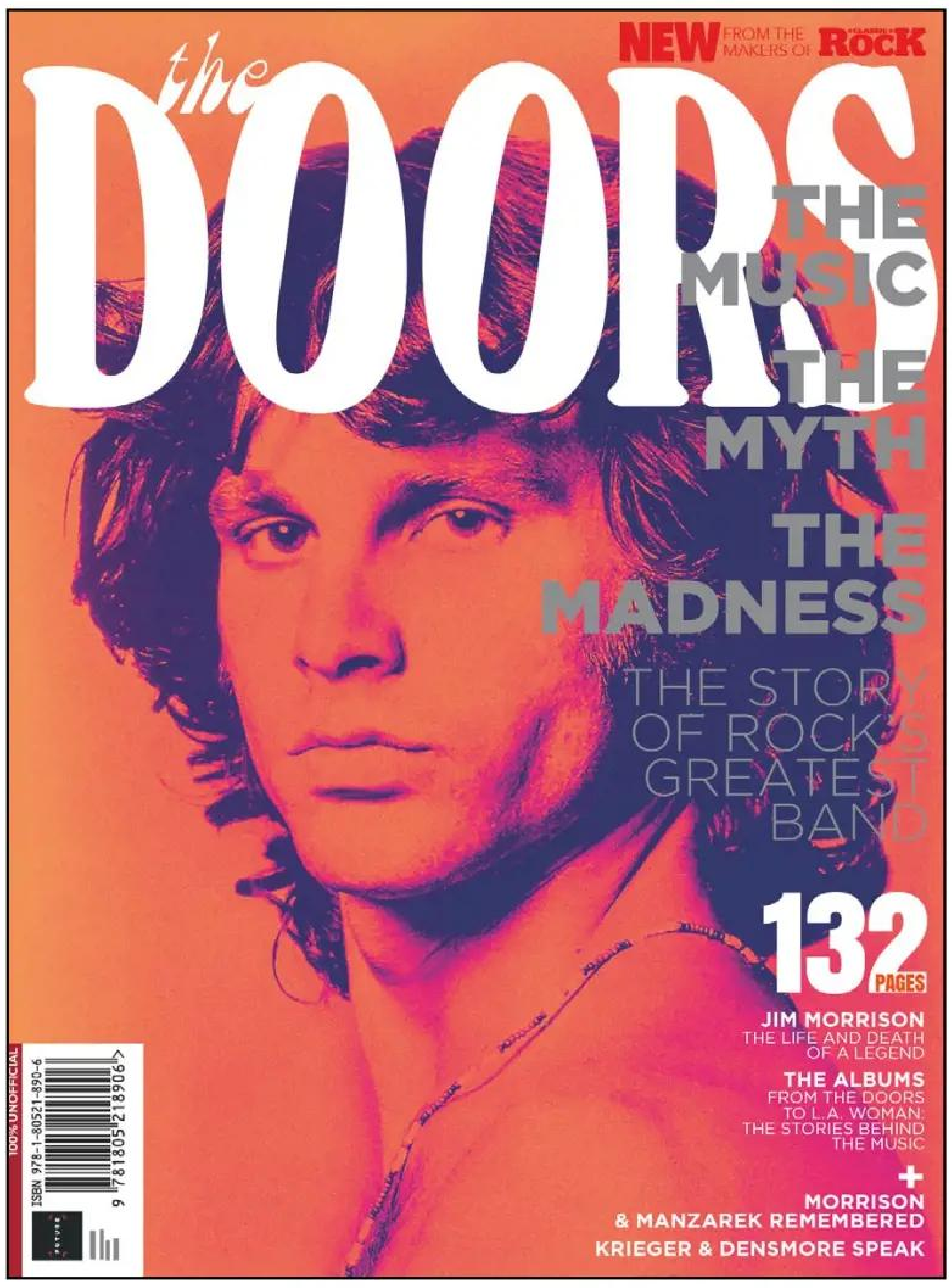
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"*Break on through to the other side…*" Has any band ever summed up their mission statement better than The Doors did on the opening track of their iconic debut album? In that one line, Jim Morrison encapsulated the magnetic, mysterious pull his band would exert not only during their brief, eight-year existence, but long after.

It's more than 50 years since Morrison died in Paris, but The Doors are as big as they've ever been. Their six-album discography (nine if you count the posthumous records they released) are as influential now as they were innovative back then, inspiring hordes of poets, visionaries and would-be libertines to slide into a pair of leather trousers and dial up the enigma to its maximum setting. Of course, The Doors weren't just about their frontman – the band's music was just as groundbreaking, neither blues, psychedelia, rock nor jazz, but a boundary-pushing mixture of all four.

This special 132-page magazine, drawn from the archives of *Classic Rock*, is a celebration of one of the greatest bands America has ever produced. It charts the band's stellar rise, in the words of the people who were there, including guitarist Robby Krieger, drummer John Densmore and late keyboard player Ray Manzarek, and dives deep into the making of their classic albums, from that landmark self-titled debut to Morrison's powerful swansong *L.A. Woman*. We also look at the myth that has grown up around the singer, go inside Oliver Stone's 1990 biopic and chart the band's long and eventful afterlife. As Jim Morrison once said: "Out here on the perimeters, there are no stars…"

Dave

Dave Everley - Editor

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

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MR MOJO RISIN'

Long before he joined The Doors, **Jim Morrison** was a volatile kid with a whole lot of attitude. This is the story of the birth of The Lizard King.

Words: **Joe Daly**

"Take off your clothes!" the singer leers at the thousands of fans surging toward him on the stage. "Let's see a little skin around here! Let's get naked!"

It's March 1, 1969, and Jim Morrison is in full rock god mode onstage at Miami's Dinner Key Auditorium. Blitzed out of his mind from a day of drinking, The Doors frontman has spent much of the show provoking the crowd. Many are unimpressed by his antics, though not as unimpressed as the Miami cops in attendance. Their mood isn't improved when Morrison grabs the hat of one of them and hurls it into the audience.

Then comes the fateful moment. "Do you want to see my cock?" he howls. Reports differ as to whether he actually gets the organ in question out or not, but it's a signal for fans – some of them naked – to rush the stage, causing it to buckle under the additional weight. "We're not leaving until everyone gets their rocks off!" Morrison cries above the chaos, his provocation fulfilled.

They finish the gig, but four days later, six warrants are issued for Morrison on obscenity charges. Soon afterwards, he gives himself up to the FBI in Los Angeles.

The incident in Miami has become a key part in the myth of Jim Morrison. Yet perception of the singer as Lizard King – the carefully-curated persona that cast him as both shaman and poet, the primal, sexualised spearhead of a new revolution – demands more than a superficial glance at his notorious rock'n'roll exploits. To truly understand the transformation, one must dig deep into the seething cauldron of his formative years, a period characterised by isolation, erudition, grandiose delusions and a peculiar brand of artistic self-absorption that would lay the groundwork for one of music's most magnetic figures.

Jim Morrison was born on December 8, 1943, in Melbourne, Florida, 200 miles up the Atlantic coast from the location of the riotous scenes he would provoke nearly 26 years later. The son of Admiral George Stephen Morrison and Clara Clarke Morrison, he was called 'Jimmy' by friends and family and would remain so throughout his youth.

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The 19-year-old Jim Morrison's mugshot after being arrested for public drunkenness in 1963.

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY RIGHT: PICTORIAL PRESS LTD/ALAMY

> "Jim would often explain that his parents – still very much alive – were dead."

A pivotal moment in Morrison's early years has become a cornerstone of his mythos. In several interviews, he claimed that, while driving with his family and grandparents one morning, they came across a fatal accident involving a group of Native Americans who had been killed in a truck crash. He liked to say that as they drove past the wreck, the soul of one of the victims passed into Jim's body, infusing him with centuries of wisdom and power. Though just three or four years old at the time, Morrison cited this incident as a revelation that unveiled the mysteries of mortality. In his autobiography, *Riders On The Storm*, sceptical Doors drummer John Densmore describes the tale as "a leap of faith if there ever was one." True or not, the story embodied Morrison's quest for higher consciousness and his propensity for vivid myth-making.

His upbringing was defined by physical and emotional upheaval as his father was shuttled from one military posting to another across the country. Jim's early years were a parade of new faces and changing scenery, a relentless motion that must have bred a profound sense of restlessness. This life of constant flux and displacement was bound to leave a mark, and it transformed young Jimmy into a tempestuous adolescent.

It was after the Morrison family relocated to Claremont, California that his rebellion first flashed brightly. By sixth grade, he was a model student and an athletic standout, but underneath the surface was a simmering cauldron of defiance. The seeds of his iconoclasm were evident when he was expelled from the Cub Scouts for disruptive behaviour and for disrespecting his den mother – a prelude to the more public spectacles that would define his later years.

▷

West coast meets east coast: The Doors onstage in New York in 1966.

DON PAULSEN/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

He bullied his younger siblings, often to shocking lengths. In 1955, during a family ski trip, Morrison's reckless behaviour nearly ended in tragedy when he piloted a toboggan also containing his two younger siblings straight toward a barn, impervious to his sibling's cries and mother's screams as he careened toward impending disaster. His father's intervention averted potential catastrophe, but the young Jimmy's dismissive attitude towards the incident hinted at a burgeoning contempt for authority and a thirst for chaos.

As Eisenhower-era conformity began to clash with the rebellious surge of rock'n'roll, Morrison's restless spirit found itself at odds with the stifling expectations of his upbringing. By 1958, his family were living in Alameda, California, 10 miles east of San Francisco. The 15-year-old Jim often skipped school to frequent San Francisco's beatnik circles, entranced by the radical ideas of Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs. He hung out at Lawrence Ferlinghetti's bohemian City Lights bookstore, where he mingled with the city's artistic avant garde and became enmeshed in the Beat ethos. His intellectual appetite was voracious, consuming the works of Burroughs, Friedrich Nietzsche and Norman Mailer with an insatiable thirst. He also developed a deep fascination with art house films and the intellectual dimensions of postmodern filmmaking.

In 1958, the Morrisons moved once more, Alexandria, Virginia, where Jim finished high school with a growing sense of isolation and disillusionment. His final years at high school were marked by a descent into a darker, more withdrawn demeanour. He leaned into a beatnik style that complemented his nihilistic outlook, spending hours haunting the city's waterfront and immersing himself in books that further alienated him from mainstream society.

His rebellious streak was now paired with a self-destructive edge, and his proclivities for manipulation and abuse became increasingly frequent. His girlfriends bore the brunt of Morrison's petty cruelties and withering emotional slights. In eleventh grade, he once rode a bus into Washington with his then-girlfriend, suddenly ditching her and disappearing into the city, leaving her alone in hysterics.

After graduating in 1961, Morrison – by most estimations, the smartest kid in his class – had few options, having elected to not submit any college applications. When his family moved to San Diego for the Admiral's next assignment, Jim was not invited. Instead, he ended up back in Florida, attending St. Petersburg Junior College and eventually transferring to the racially segregated Florida State University in 1962.

There fascination with literature and film grew, but FSU's lack of a film program was a problem. Morrison's dreams of filmmaking and poetic glory were stifled by the beer-swilling, football-centric culture of the university. In September 1963, at the age of 19, he was arrested at a school football game when, incensed by what he estimated was the sub-par performance of his classmates on the field, his drunken heckling turned to stealing a police officer's helmet, drawing a list of charges including public drunkenness and resisting arrest. The charges were later dropped.

It was a disillusioning period for Morrison, but it set the stage for his next big move. When a professor suggested he apply to UCLA's Theater Arts Department in Los Angeles, which had a film school, the die was cast. In 1964, he headed west once more. This wasn't merely a geographic shift – it was a leap into the heart of artistic experimentation and intellectual rebellion.

At UCLA, Morrison's enrolmed in Jack Hirschman's class on Antonin Artaud, the French playwright and theorist renowned for his radical and surrealist approach to theatre. It endowed his artistic sensibilities with a fresh, darkly poetic dynamism. Artaud's theories on 'Theatre Of Cruelty', with its emphasis on breaking down traditional forms and exploring the raw, visceral aspects of human experience, resonated deeply with Morrison's burgeoning creative vision. It laid a solid foundation for his future endeavours, both on stage and off.

Imbued with the freedom to fully commit to his intellectual pursuits, Jim cut ties with most members of his family, citing a lack of empathy and support. When asked about his family, Jim would often explain that his parents – still very much alive – were dead. It's a lie that persisted through their self-titled debut album, which included press materials that identified Jim as an orphan. It seemed essential to Jim's persona

"The avant garde spirit of Los Angeles offered Morrison the perfect backdrop for his artistic pursuits."

The Doors in 1966: (l-r) Robby Krieger, John Densmore, Jim Morrison and Ray Manzarek

EARL LEAF/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

that he shun all trappings of normalcy or anything that gave the impression Jim was just like everybody else. A normal childhood, stable family and even the occasional loan from his parents just didn't play into the myth.

For Jim, UCLA was a period not marked by stellar academic achievement but by an immersion into a world where he could mould his burgeoning ideas about art and existence into something tangible. He grew out his hair and embraced acid and pot. His final diploma, earned in 1965, was merely a footnote in a broader narrative of creative upheaval and artistic exploration. Those years were less about acquiring a degree and more about absorbing and manipulating the radical ideas of his professors. He began to channel his creative energies into film and poetry. The avant garde spirit of Los Angeles, combined with the libertine and increasingly psychedelic cultural scene, offered him the perfect backdrop for his artistic pursuits.

He'd long been a fan of Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly and the blazing pioneers of the rock movement of the 50s and early 60s, but nowhere in any reliable account of Morrison's youth does one find any passion for becoming a musician, let alone a rock star. His musical aspirations were secondary to his broader artistic ambitions, and his eventual foray into rock stardom was as much a serendipitous detour as a planned trajectory.

The first step of this detour occurred on a sun-baked stretch of Venice Beach in the July 1965. As Jim wandered along the sand, he ran into his UCLA film school buddy, Ray Manzarek – a fellow auteur who also played keyboard in Rick And The Ravens. Sitting in the sand, they talked about life, school and of course, girls, before Jim revealed that he'd been writing songs. Prodded by Ray, the uncharacteristically self-conscious Jim reluctantly sang the lyrics to *Moonlight Drive*, a song that would eventually appear on The Doors' second album, *Strange Days*.

It was a revelation. As Morrison ran through one song after another, Manzarek began envisioning their band. Famously, the latter proclaimed to Jim, "We're gonna make a million dollars." According to Manzarek, Jim replied, "Ray, that's exactly what I had in mind."

In that moment, the seeds of The Doors were sown. This fateful encounter was more than a casual meeting; it was the ignition of a creative inferno that would set the world ablaze. Morrison and Manzarek stood at the precipice of something far greater than either could have fathomed.

By the start of 1966, the Doors' line-up had coalesced into the one that would carry it through the next five years: Morrison and Manzarek, plus guitarist Robby Krieger and drummer John Densmore. They secured a residence at Sunset Strip club London Fog, before making the leap to the more prestigious Whisky A Go Go.

It was at the Whisky that Jac Holzman, the owner of rising independent label Elektra Records, came to see The Doors play for the first time. Unimpressed, he left midway through the set but, at the insistence of friends, he returned the next night, and the next and the next. On August 20, 1966, Elektra offered the band a deal. Five months later, in January 1967, The Doors released their self-titled debut album.

That album would mark the beginning of new chapter in the life of Jim Morrison, the wayward kid with the volatile personality, grandiose vision and artistic brilliance. The Lizard King was about to emerge from the chaos of his past, ready to confront the world with a blend of poetic darkness and rock'n'roll audacity that would define an era. The future was about to be rewritten in the hallucinatory haze of The Doors' debut album – a journey that began with a troubled youth and culminated in a mythic legend.

CAN YOU PICTURE WHAT WILL BE?

GETTY

In late August 1966, **The Doors** entered the studio to record their debut album. Released five months later, it laid down a singular marker that still resonates today.

Words: **Mick Wall**

The Whisky A Go Go, West Hollywood, May 1966, after midnight. Jac Holzman, 35-year-old owner of Elektra Records, just arrived on the red-eye from New York, is blearily checking out this new band that club manager Ronnie Haran keeps bugging him about. They're called The Doors, and Ronnie says they are far out, man, trippy. And they have a to-die-for 22-year-old singer that even the boys want to lick the face of. Holzman, who has recently signed the band Love – whose lysergically depth-charged debut album he also produced – has absolutely no interest in signing another psychedelic rock band. But Love's leader, Arthur Lee, has also hipped him to these new cats, The Doors, and so Holzman feels obliged to at least give them the once-over.

Holzman, though, is not impressed by The Doors. "Morrison made no impression whatsoever," he would tell me years later. "There was nothing that tagged him as special."

Indeed, Holzman recalls being so underwhelmed he walked out mid-set. But then Haran insisted he come back the following night. Jim was acting up, she said, refusing to put on a show for the record company 'suit' Arthur Lee had told him was in the audience. Which is how Holzman found himself back at the Whisky the following night, watching The Doors all over again. But still no eureka moment. Just a band bashing out a terse form of blues with vague classical and jazz leanings. Nevertheless, everyone Holzman talked to in LA now seemed to have a bead on The Doors. When Barry Friedman, the former Beatles publicist who had recently begun managing one of LA's other hottest new bands, Buffalo Springfield, started babbling about them too, Holzman went back to the Whisky the next night – and the next.

"The question I ask myself when I look at any artist is: is this music something I haven't heard before?" explains Holzman. "Well, it wasn't the first two or three nights but it was the last night. Sometimes there are songs ▷

The Doors in London in 1968 for a *Top Of The Pops* appearance.

that are like Rosetta Stones, and once I heard [their version of] *Alabama Song (Whisky Bar),* I got the rest of it. All the gaps just filled in."

Because The Doors "had taken something that was so off the wall" – a 1925 song written for Bertolt Brecht and set to music by Kurt Weill – "and converted it into a song that could appear on a rock album," Holzman finally got what The Doors' monochromatic, mock-Weimar cabaret sound was all about. Where every other band in 1966 was extolling a wide-eyed gambol through the acid-kissed prism of love-love-love, The Doors appeared as the antithesis to all that, the dark angel come to eat its own children. Fuck its own mother; kill its own father.

Holzman approached the band in their dressing room at the Whisky that same night.

"When I heard that fourth night I knew this was a great band," he says. "I wanted to be where nobody else was yet."

Which was exactly where Morrison and The Doors lay in wait for Holzman and the rest of the world to find them.

In truth, the four members of The Doors could not believe their luck. They had been turned down by every record company on the West Coast, their only previous deal with Columbia having petered out before they'd even recorded anything, and though they didn't know it yet they were mere days away from being fired from the only steady gig they had. If Jac Holzman had walked into their dressing room wearing a Santa Claus outfit and carrying a sackful of cash, he could not have made a more welcoming impression. Nevertheless, true to form, Jim Morrison urged the others – keyboardist Ray Manzarek, guitarist Robby Krieger and drummer John Densmore – to play it cool. As a result, says Holzman, he was forced to go "through the agony of a summer trying to nurse them toward signing [the deal], which did not occur until several months later."

Ronnie Haran, who Morrison was then living with, advised the band to get a good lawyer, suggesting they use hers – but they turned down the offer. This caused bad blood and Jim was forced to move out of Ronnie's apartment. As he was leaving, he told her, "I'll be dead in two years." But Jim was always saying stuff like that.

CAN YOU PICTURE WHAT WILL BE?
THE DOORS

"When I heard that fourth night [at the Whisky], I knew this was a great band."

Jac Holzman, owner of Elektra Records

In the end they followed the advice of Robby's father, Stu Krieger, who put them together with the deliciously named Max Fink, a big-cigar Hollywood attorney who knew his way around the back alleys of LA as well as he did its glitzy front offices.

Fink ate out-of-town New York suits like Holzman for breakfast – or told The Doors he did – and set about his work with relish, drafting a letter of agreement that everybody signed on August 20, allowing The Doors and Elektra to proceed with recording an album, but delaying any long-term deal until the contract was finally agreed in November.

Any other record company chief would have walked away. Fortunately for The Doors, Jac Holzman was not any other record company chief. The eldest son of a Park Avenue doctor, Jac was a super-smart boy who studied Descartes at college, and who would bring his gift for minute analysis and almost geometrical calculation to all his future dealings.

"I wanted people to think of Elektra as different to the others," he says. Well, they certainly did that. By the time he met The Doors, Holzman's Elektra had become one of the leading independent record labels in the world. Three weeks later The Doors were ensconced in Sunset Sound Recorders, a bare-knuckles Hollywood recording facility purpose-built by Walt Disney in 1958 to record the soundtracks to *Mary Poppins* and *101 Dalmatians.*

Originally, Holzman had considered producing The Doors' debut album himself. But after meeting Jim he turned the job over to his right-hand man, the producer Paul A Rothchild.

"I loved the studio, but I thought Paul knew more than I did about how to do this kind of band," Holzman explained. "Ray and Jim were super-smart, and you needed a guy who was as well read as they were, and Paul was that. I thought he could really whip them into shape."

At 31, Rothchild was just old enough to exert authority over the group, just young enough to be hip to their trip. A classically trained musician from New Jersey, who had been groomed for success by his mother, a singer with the Metropolitan Opera, Rothchild had trained under the tutelage of the conductor Bruno Walter. Swept up by the folk revival, he found himself in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on the board of Club 47, the small but significant venue in the Harvard Square area of Cambridge where Joan Baez gave her very first concert, barefoot, in 1958.

The next few years found Rothchild working as a Boston-area record distributor, while also trying to make his mark as a producer. By 1964, Rothchild had relocated to New York, where he hooked up with fellow folk-rock enthusiast Jac Holzman and produced his first albums for Elektra Records.

Clad in regulation skintight jeans, even tighter T-shirt or often as not no shirt at all, his long hair tied in a ponytail to distract attention from the fact that he was already balding, Rothchild would come striding through the studio door, avoiding all eye contact until he was settled behind the console, where he would snap open his briefcase. "The briefcase was famous," says Holzman. "It held everything he might possibly need: pitch pipe, the latest gadgets, cigarettes, whatever drug was up for the evening."

Paul was a loner, super-focused and as self-absorbed as any artist. "He could do a 'Hey man' to the artist," as Holzman put it. Plus, Paul owed Jac big – and despite reservations gave in when Jac reminded him of it. Rothchild had just been released from prison after serving eight months of a two-year sentence for possession of marijuana – several suitcases full of the stuff. While Paul had been incarcerated, Jac had given his wife part-time work at Elektra, to help her meet the bills.

First, though, Rothchild insisted he work with the band at some intense pre-production rehearsals. "The arrangements and the way things went, were a lot Paul Rothchild," Holzman says. The prime example was *Light My Fire,* which the stickler-for-detail producer sculpted from the musical miasma of its sprawling live incarnation into something with real shape and gravitas.

Even though they were there with Rothchild – and his engineer Bruce Botnick, who had previously worked with the producer on Tim Buckley's first album – for less than a week, The Doors "owned Studio B" at Sunset Sound. Yet the band was so paranoid about being ripped off, at the end of every session the doors would be double-locked. Dropping in on the sessions, Holzman was also convinced this was precious cargo.

"It was for Elektra Records, so I knew it was going be different," Botnick now recalls. While Rothchild had the "vision thing" – converting an extremely functional four-track facility into a late-night netherworld where Jim and the band could let their nocturnal spirits roam, even as he obliged them to do different takes, teasing the best performances out of them – the 23-year- ▷

Producer Paul Rothchild (right) works his magic in the studio.

GETTY X2

old Botnick's job was to be Mr Fixit, getting the set-up right, keeping the tape rolling, placing bafflers and mics, helping Paul fly the faders, coming up with the little extras that might make the difference.

"Jim was in the vocal booth. The guys were in the studio itself. It's 10 feet apart at the most. They could see one another. I always kept the lights dark in the studio. You know, they needed to have that. Down to screwing in some red light bulbs in the studio that glowed like that."

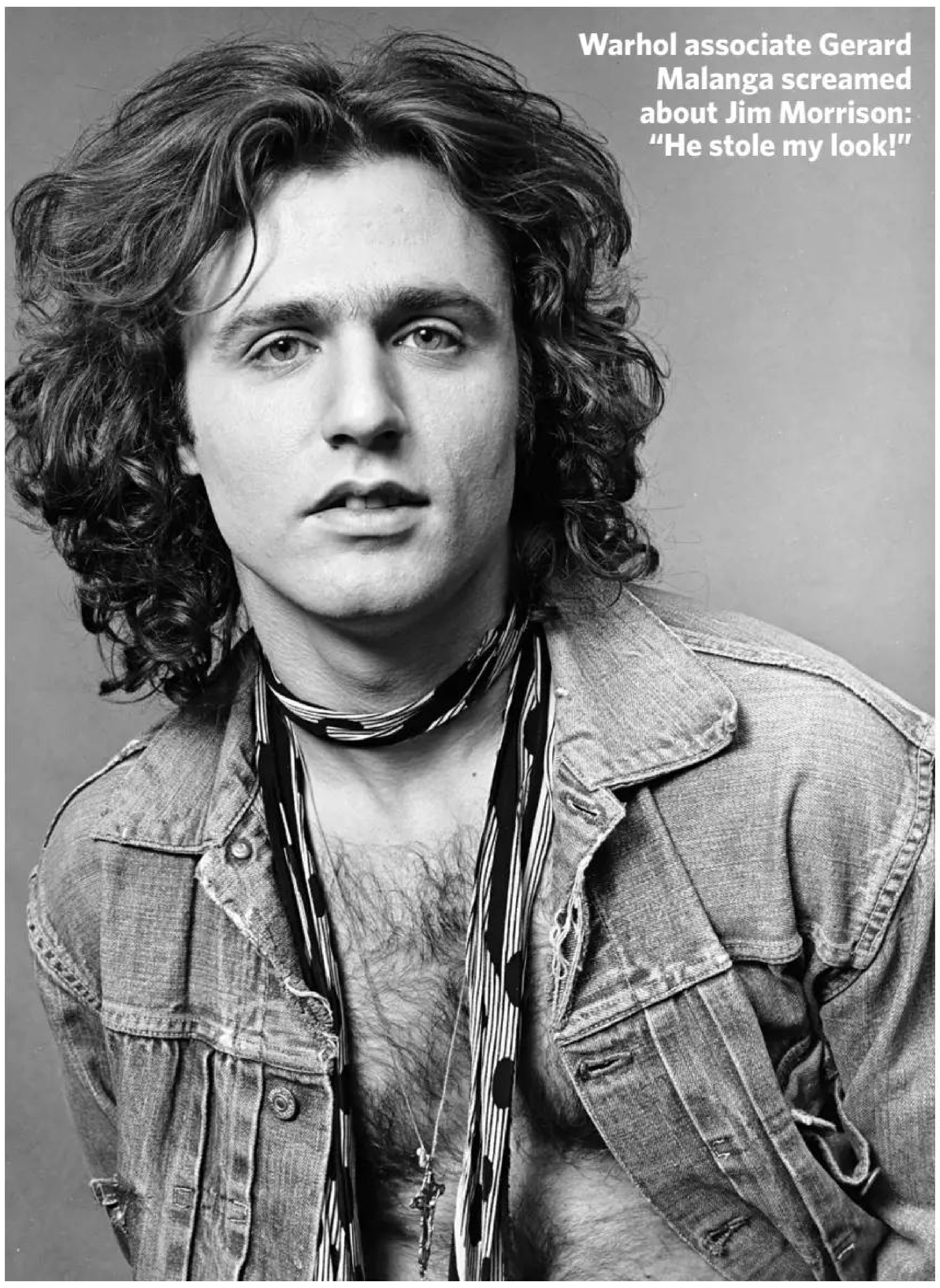
The first day the band arrived in the studio, Botnick recalls, "they had pretty much the first two albums ready to go. The thought that Paul had was that we were to be invisible – to allow them to capture the magic of The Doors as you went to hear them." He adds: "They were totally different than anything else I was recording. I was recording the Beach Boys, The Turtles, The Ventures… and The Doors were totally different, it was the beginning of that era of American sixties music."

Bassist Larry Knechtel, part of the top LA-based session outfit the Wrecking Crew, who had played on dozens of hit records throughout the 60s, was hired to play on six of the album's eventual 11 tracks, with Ray handling the others on keyboard bass. Only three of the studio's four tracks of tape were actually used – drums and bass on one, guitar and keyboards on another, and Jim's vocals on the third – with the fourth track kept back for overdubs.

Apart from the album's two cornerstone tracks – the seven-minute-plus *Light My Fire* and the nearly 12-minute *The End* – most of the tracks were less than three minutes long. But then, in truth, despite regularly being hailed since as one of the all-time great rock debuts, the first Doors album was a mixed bag of disposable 60s pop and a truly gothic form of rock, with layers of Indian raga, jazz stylings and neo-classical pretensions.

While tracks like the rousing, call-to-arms opener, *Break On Through (To The Other Side)* and the genuinely spaced-out *Crystal Ship*, with its, for the times, outlandish opening couplet: *'Before you slip into, un-con-scious-ness…'*, suggested a very different, far more advanced, into-the-night type of rock band than any seen before, others like *Soul Kitchen* – inspired by the band's fondness for a cheap and cheerful Venice Beach soul-food joint called Olivia's – and *Twentieth Century Fox* – a droolingly stoned play on words, geddit? – are so wincingly à la mode they would have struggled to get on the first Monkees album, also being made that summer.

The painfully peacocking *I Looked At You* sounds like a Paul Revere & The Raiders B-side. Other tracks, such as *End Of The Night* – another self-consciously spooky interlude with only its Céline-inspired title to guide it – and the deliriously vacuous *Take It As It Comes* sound like what they are: side salads for the real steaks on the plate: *Light My Fire*, with its grandiose Bach-fugue intro and swirling instrumental middle section inspired by John Coltrane's *Olé*, and *The End*, the only truly riveting musical journey into the mystic they make, which, fittingly, closes the album.



Warhol associate Gerard Malanga screamed about Jim Morrison: "He stole my look!"

CAN YOU PICTURE WHAT WILL BE?
THE DOORS

> **"They were totally different from anything else I was recording… It was the beginning of that era of American sixties music."**
>
> **Bruce Botnick**

Given the inclusion also of two cover songs – their admittedly inspired live reading of *Alabama Song (Whisky Bar)* – and Jim's thinly veiled reference to his growing obsession with anal sex, Willie Dixon's *Back Door Man* (every groupie on Sunset Strip was now privately complaining about how Jim was pestering them for it) – it seems strange that they didn't consider including some of the other tracks they already had completed, specifically, the truly transcendent *Moonlight Drive* and the equally ethereal *Indian Summer* – or at the very least, if they were looking for a hit, *Hello, I Love You*. All of which were recorded during the sessions – and would be included on future Doors albums – but passed over when it came to the final sequencing of their debut.

According to Robby Krieger, the beautiful *Indian Summer*, though it would not be released for another four years, was the first song the band ever fully completed, with *Moonlight Drive* coming after. But Paul Rothchild had decided they needed more upbeat numbers so *Indian Summer* got nixed in favour of *Back Door Man*, and the original version they cut of *Moonlight Drive* they simply didn't think was good enough. (Listening to the track on the contemporary re-mastered CD version of the album, released after Rothchild's death in 1995, it's hard to disagree.)

"Every day we got something great," Rothchild would recall. "Jim was out of control on some days, but that was just another aspect of that phenomenon: the Jim Morrison spirit! Because we were recording when Jim was at one of his most insane points, when he was deep into acid." They would try various different songs, do a few takes then move on to another. They even tried having a go at *The End* on the first night but it just wasn't happening. So they got it on the second night instead, shrugged Rothchild.

In fact, the recording of *The End*, which would eventually roll out to almost 12 minutes in length – unheard of for a rock song at that time – precipitated one of the most oft-told, yet always exaggerated stories from the making of the first Doors album. According to legend, the band was two-thirds of the way through playing the track, just after Jim had turned his on-stage announcement of wanting to fuck his mother into an incoherent yowl, and as he began to dervish around the studio he noticed – oh, the insult! – that Bruce Botnick was watching a small black-and-white TV tuned to a baseball game, which Jim, absolutely furious, smashed to the floor before picking it up and hurling it through the studio glass into the control room, where Botnick and Rothchild sat shocked.

Speaking now, however, Botnick sighs and claims it was a far less dramatic moment.

"I don't know why I did this but I had this Sony TV, a little one, on a stool looking into the control room."

The Los Angeles Dodgers were playing the St Louis Cardinals with the baseball legend Sandy Koufax pitching. As far as Bruce – who had no idea yet who The Doors were – was concerned, he'd simply brought the TV into work with him to catch the game – with the sound off.

"And in [Jim's] flying around he knocked it off. It did not explode. It did not catch on fire. He did not pick it up and throw it through the

THE DOORS
BREAK ON THROUGH
ALABAMA SONG · BACK DOOR MAN · END OF THE NIGHT
LIGHT MY FIRE
THE DOORS
the doors

GETTY

The Doors were much more than just Jim Morrison: (l-r) John Densmore, Jim Morrison, Robby Krieger, Ray Manzarek.

GETTY x2

glass as Ray Manzarek said that he did. None of that happened. But he knocked it off and yes it went on the floor, and the tape continued. In between takes I walked out into the studio and got it and turned it off. And then we did a second take. *The End* comprises two takes and we edited it together – the first half and the second half. For the performance aspect we made the cut. Because everything that happened on that album was based on performance.”

CAN YOU PICTURE WHAT WILL BE?
THE DOORS

“We perform a musical séance. Not to *raise* the dead, but to palliate the dead, to ease the pain and the suffering of the dead and the living.”

Jim Morrison

The other flashpoint from those sessions that has since gone down in history has also been exaggerated, according to Botnick: the one in which a fiercely tripping Morrison – on the same night they completed splicing the two best performances of ‘*The End* together – returned alone to Sunset Sound and proceeded to trash the studio, throwing ashtray-sand over the floor and emptying a fire extinguisher into the mixing console.

According to Botnick, though, this was not merely an act of acid-crazed petulance, but a genuine attempt, albeit with lid flapping wide open, to avert what Morrison saw as a disaster.

“Sunset Sound was an old garage [that had] been converted. It was absorption, brick, absorption, brick… Inside each brick was a light, and that’s where I screwed the red light bulbs.”

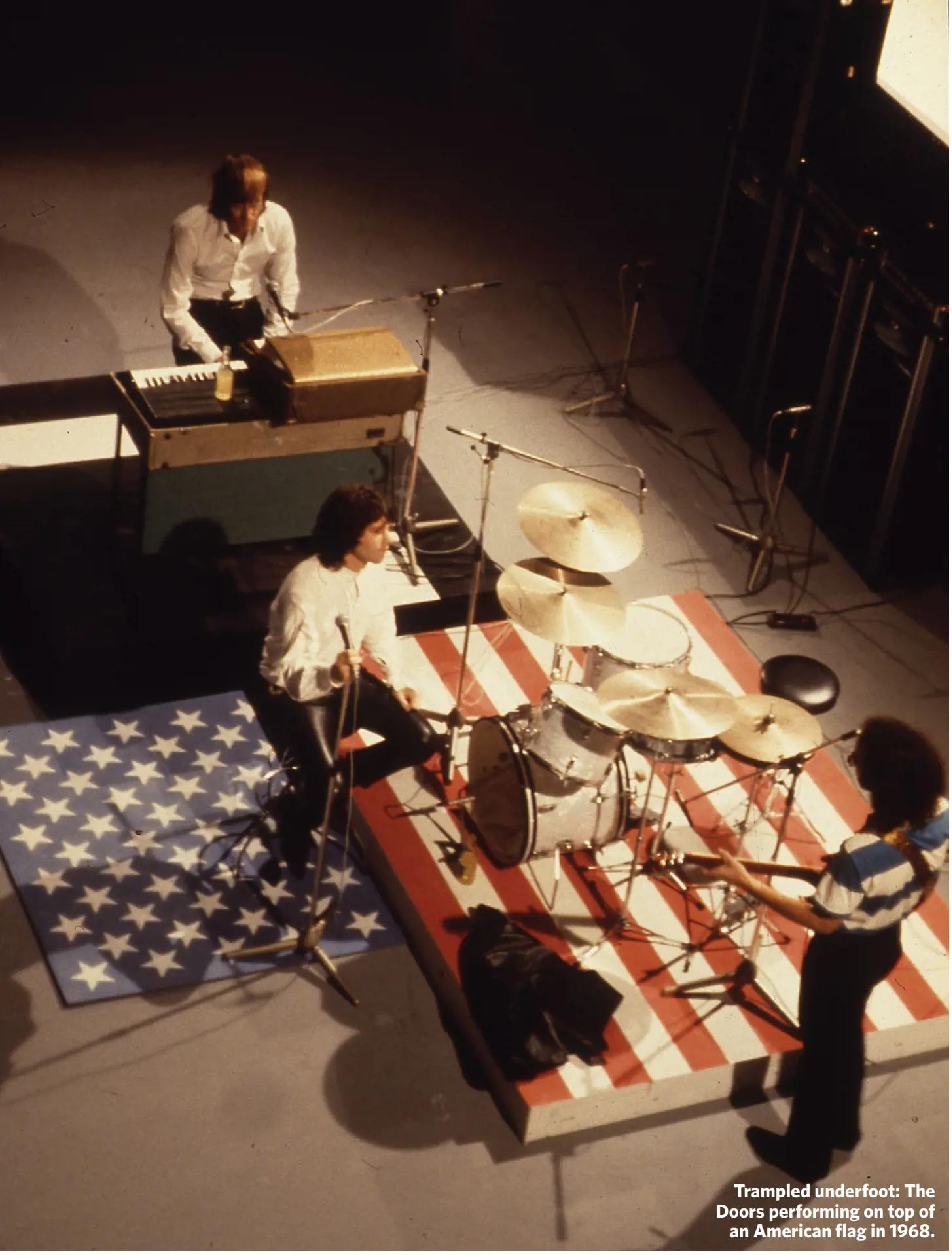
After everyone had left the studio that night, Jim had “gone across the street to the Blessed Sacrament, a Catholic Church, and he had an epiphany over there. He came back to the studio and the gate was locked. He climbed over the gate, got in but he couldn’t get in the control room. That was locked. But the studio was open and the red lights were on and he thought it was on fire so he grabbed a fire extinguisher and knocked over the ashtrays that were full of sand and tried to put out the fire.”

Recalling the incident at the time, however, Rothchild said he’d received a phone call from the chick Jim had left the session with, saying Jim had jumped out of her car and was headed back to the studio. When Paul got there Jim was shoeless and shirtless. When Paul asked him what the fuck, he just grinned that slow-burn grin and said: “I want to record.” Paul talked him down and they retired to Jim’s pad, where they spent the rest of the night digging the Stones, Donovan, Howlin’ Wolf… Paul finally escaped around dawn.

As he walked through the door of his Laurel Canyon home his phone was ringing. It was studio owner, Tutti Camarata, apoplectic with rage, saying the studio had been trashed: fire extinguisher foam all over the mixing console, sand from a stand-up ashtray hurled across the room. Also a pair of Jim’s old stinky boots… Did Paul know who they belonged to? Paul said he did not. Then told him wearily to send the bill to Elektra.

In the end, despite the stoned immaculate shenanigans of both band and producer, the first Doors album – simply titled *The Doors* – took just five days to make. Yet it took five months for Elektra to finally release it. This was almost entirely down to the fact that it took another three months of ▷

Jim Morrison shot in Los Angeles on New Year's Day, 1968.



Trampled underfoot: The Doors performing on top of an American flag in 1968.

CAN YOU PICTURE WHAT WILL BE?
THE DOORS

"The insane sexuality of Jim drove the establishment right over the edge."

Ray Manzarek

interminable contractual wrangling between Holzman and Fink before they finally agreed a deal. Jim and Ray had pushed at that point for the album to be released immediately, in time for Christmas. But Jac, the wise old label head, knew better and talked them into allowing Elektra to hold back its release until the new year.

Ray and the rest of the band acquiesced, realising they had no choice in the matter anyway. But Jim threw a tantrum and again needed to be talked down. As Holzman later recalled, even then Jim and the other three members of The Doors were "really two entities: Ray Manzarek–Robby Krieger–John Densmore, and Jim Morrison, separate and apart."

Morrison was now living in a nine-dollars-a-night room at The Tropicana ('The Trop', as Jim called it), the rundown West Hollywood motel where the black-tiled pool had no water and the guests festered, sharing their drugs and cheap wine, bed-hopping and stealing from each other; the kind of low-rent dive where all the musicians that hadn't yet made it stayed.

Meanwhile, the other three Doors still lived in either the comfort of their parents' house (John and Robby) or with their live-in partner out by the Beach (Ray and his future wife Dorothy). There was Jim, and there were The Others. Holzman got this immediately, and decided early on that the key to working successfully with The Doors would be to always keep Jim happy.

Jac painted Jim a picture of the kind of campaign Elektra would build around the album when it was finally released in January 1967: "I said: 'We'll have more time to prepare for you and I'll release no other album that month, which means you've got Elektra working a hundred per cent on your album for the first month. And by the way, I have this idea about putting a billboard up on Sunset Strip…' Well, that caught Jim. He loved that idea. He said: 'Where'd you come up with that?'"

True to his word, Holzman got his Elektra staff so cranked up on The Doors they could talk of nothing else right through the Christmas holidays, then added the promised cherry of making The Doors the first rock band ever to feature on one of Hollywood's giant billboards overlooking the Strip.

By then, though, The Doors were starting to feel a sense of entitlement that would soon outgrow a dozen billboards on Sunset Boulevard. A November 1966 residency in New York at the ultra-hip nightclub Ondine's had seen to that. When Andy Warhol walked with his entourage the first night, he recalled Gerard Malanga – the college dropout-poet-actor-scenester who had appeared in five of Andy's celebrated 'art movies' before he was 22 – freaking out, screaming about Jim: "He stole my look!"

It was true. When Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable, as it was dubbed, set up at The Trip in Los Angeles, in May '66, Jim had been so impressed by Malanga's macho, crotch-bulging, leather-trousered presence, dancing in a Marlon Brando T-shirt, lifting toy barbells and pretending to shoot up with lighted candles, he immediately set about appropriating the look for his own purposes.

By the time The Doors arrived in New York six months later, Morrison's leather pants and shirt open to the navel look new look were an established part of his act – and an immediate hit with all the women at Doors shows, who were now starting to outnumber the men. With Elektra now pushing The Doors as 'the American Rolling Stones', this was a masterly piece of PR equating the recent hit Stones album, *Aftermath* – a glowering, almost gothic work that had been a turning point for the Stones – with the crazy, head-spinning trip The Doors were about to take you on.

As Ray Manzarek would tell me: "As Jim once said: 'We perform a musical séance. Not to raise the dead, but to palliate the dead, to ease the pain and the suffering of the dead and the living.' And in doing that we dove into areas that were deeply, deeply Freudian, and psychologically deeply Jungian at the same time. So we were a merging of both Freud and Jung. Which might seem impossible, but it happened on stage, and really upset the establishment. There was just something about the power in the music, and that insane sexuality of Jim Morrison, that drove the establishment right over the edge."

One convert was Gloria Stavers, a 39-year-old former model. Then editor of *16* magazine, at the time the biggest-circulation teen mag in America, Stavers had once been Lenny Bruce's girlfriend, and had helped, through her patronage, turn Herman's Hermits into bigger stars in America than both The Beatles and the Stones. Gloria liked to photograph the bands herself, inviting them to her New York loft apartment, where if all went well the session would conclude in her bedroom. When the freelance writer-turned-ad-hoc Elektra publicist Danny Fields arranged for Jim and The Doors to spend an afternoon being shot at Gloria's apartment, the band were quickly dismissed while she got down to her real work: photographing – then seducing – Jim. ▷

GETTY x2

The Doors in 1967.

GETTY

According to Fields, "she was giving [Jim] a blowjob – and she swears he vanished; he dematerialised and was sitting on the other side of the room," he laughed. However implausible Jim's dematerialisation mid-blowjob may be, the fact is that when *The Doors* was released in January 1967, it would be Jim's image on the cover of *16* that month, under the heading: 'Morrison is Magic!'

Andy Warhol, meanwhile, was now plotting to get Jim to star in his next movie project, simply called *Fuck*. He begged Jim to let him film him having sex with Velvet Underground chanteuse Nico. When Jim laughed in his face, Andy wheedled: would he at least allow him to film Nico giving Jim a blowjob? "Fuck off, Andy."

Jim now seriously considered changing his name to James Phoenix, going so far as to request that Elektra alter his credits on the forthcoming album sleeve. The rest of the band assumed he wanted to sound more like a Warholian rock star, but secretly Jim was more concerned that his growing reputation for debauchery might badly impact on his estranged father's career in the US military, where he would soon be a Rear Admiral.

When the others talked him out of it – "It just sounded dumb, even for a warrior poet," explained Ray disingenuously – he settled instead for merely being an orphan. Back in LA for Christmas, when Elektra requested biographical information from the four band members so that they could assemble a press package in readiness for the album's release in January, Jim claimed his whole family were dead. When asked standard stuff for 1966 like: who are your favourite singers? He replied: "Frank Sinatra and Elvis Presley." This was no joke, though. He adored both singers, did everything he could to try to sound like them. When asked for his personal philosophy, however, Jim couldn't help himself and gave it both barrels: "It's the feeling of a bowstring being pulled back for twenty-two years and suddenly being let go… I've always been attracted to ideas that were about revolt against authority. I am interested in anything about revolt, disorder, chaos – especially activity that seems to have no meaning."

CAN YOU PICTURE WHAT WILL BE?
THE DOORS

> **"He never really looked that way again. I photographed Morrison at his peak."**
>
> **Joel Brodsky**

Elektra, though, had their own ideas about the 'meaning' some people might take from Doors songs, and, to the band's dismay, decided unilaterally to edit the first single from the album, *Break On Through (To The Other Side)* so that the line '*She gets high*', which Jim sings four times, on the single version scanned as, '*She gets… she gets… she gets… she gets…*' This became the version the group were forced to mime to in their first ever television appearance, on *Shebang*, on January 1, 1967. You can see the frustration in Jim's wincingly subdued performance, barely bothering to move his lips, eyes wide shut, as he stands there, all gussied up for the cameras in fawn-coloured trousers tapered at the ankles, black shirt and dark hunting jacket, but with an attitude as sullen as a teenage punk-girl forced to wear a pretty dress for the prom.

That performance stands in marked contrast to the film clip that Holzman commissioned to shoot: a suitably noir-ish colour clip defined by its stark black tones, no one but a snarling Jim seen for the first minute, and then only the heavily silhouetted form of Ray stooped over his keyboards, the priest at his lectern, Robby not getting a look in until the song is almost over. Yet it was this dark, somnambulant quality – the antithesis of the bright Californian mien of The Byrds, the Beach Boys – that helped define The Doors as different, special. So that when the clip aired on the LA TV show *Boss City*, it resulted in the band's first serious plays on local radio.

None of this, though, gave the single the impetus it needed to 'go national'; that is, give The Doors their first recognisable countrywide hit.

Danny Fields claims it was he who first brought the commercial potential of *Light My Fire* to the attention of Holzman. "They'd already released another one, but it was *Light My Fire* that made all the difference, that made the company from a small, classy company into a marketplace force."

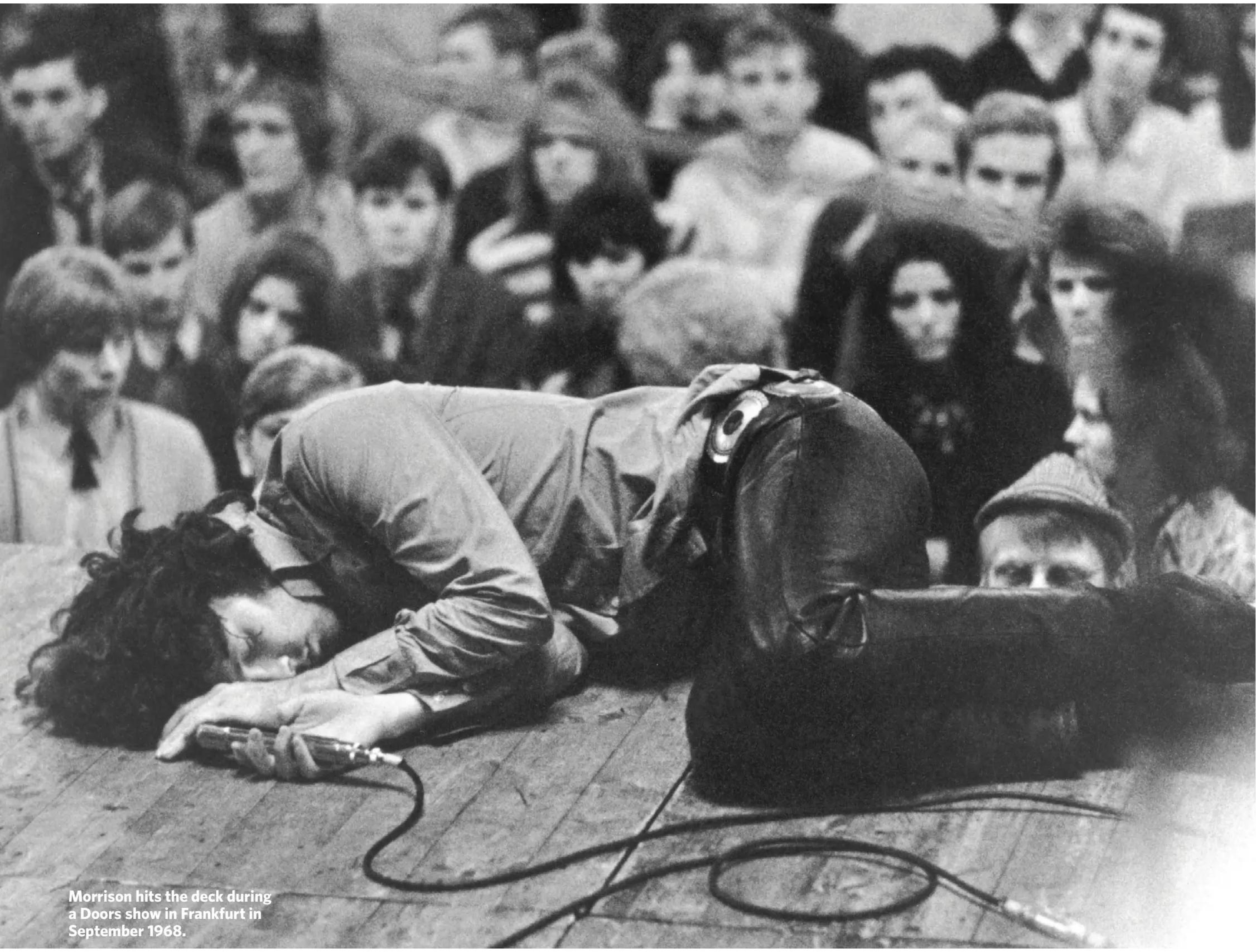
Speaking now, Holzman insists *Light My Fire* had always been in his thoughts, pointing out that the full seven-minute version from the album was already being played on the new, longer-format stereo FM stations.

"I was counting on FM radio to force AM radio to play it." The problem was AM had strict rules about 'needle-time' – no shorter than two minutes 45 seconds, no longer than three minutes. So Jac asked Paul to cut an edited version that would fit. Paul was sceptical. Jac told him to get on with it. The producer eventually cut out nearly five minutes' worth of the solos Ray and Robby had spent so long perfecting. The result was the defining hit song of the Summer of Love. And nobody, not even Jac Holzman, could have predicted that.

The band's only real stipulation, made at Jim's instigation, was that the band be an equal four-part democracy, with all songwriting credits split equally and credited simply to The Doors, and that all decisions pertaining to their music and business had to be unanimous before they could be acted on. It seemed like the perfect all-for-one strategy to bind them against whatever vicissitudes having a major record company and management behind them might bring; if everything else failed, they would have each other. It was a decision they would all later regret, in one way or another.

Meanwhile, with both *Break On Through (To The Other Side)* and *The Doors* now on release, and Sal and Asher working their mojo, the start of 1967 found the band appearing in San Francisco for the first of two weekends at Bill Graham's famous Fillmore, opening on bills headlined by the Young Rascals the first weekend, the Grateful Dead the second.

A week later The Doors were back in New ▷



Morrison hits the deck during a Doors show in Frankfurt in September 1968.

York for their second residency at Ondine's. It was during this trip that the now famous 'young lion' shots of Morrison were taken by the distinguished New York photographer Joel Brodsky. He'd already done one session with The Doors on their previous visit to NY, a shot from which adorned the back cover of *The Doors*: a technically advanced for the time quadruple exposure combining portraits of the individual group members that would later be nominated for a Grammy. Now, though, he would take the most iconic shots of his – and The Doors' – career. "I never actually heard him listen to the music he shot,' said his son-in-law, Sid Holt, a former managing editor of *Rolling Stone*. "He didn't particularly like The Doors."

Maybe so, but it's Brodsky's shots – an extended series of black-and-white pictures of a shirtless Jim posing with a string of beads around his muscled neck, his hair a halo of waterfall curls, his face as expressionless as the moon, arms outstretched in mock crucifixion pose, now known as the 'Young Lion' shots – that remain to this day the defining image of Jim Morrison, and therefore The Doors.

CAN YOU PICTURE WHAT WILL BE?
THE DOORS

> **"With Jim, it wasn't always easy. It would have been a lot easier if he'd been just a *normal* genius."**
>
> **Robby Krieger**

As usual, Jim had been drinking throughout the day and was 'pretty loose' by the time Brodsky began suggesting poses. The 'American Poet' shot, as Brodsky called it, was one of the last to be taken. And while the singer's "equilibrium wasn't too terrific" he was "great to photograph because he had a very interesting look".

When, a week later, the *Village Voice* ran the iconic Christ-like shot of Jim, arms stretched in supplication, in the showpiece article by the staff writer Howard Smith, under the heading 'New Teen Idol', Brodsky found himself inundated with "something like ten thousand requests for the picture". "You know, Morrison never really looked that way again," he reflected, "and those pictures have become a big part of The Doors' legend. I think I got him at his peak."

The Doors was now selling upwards of 10,000 copies a week on the West Coast, even if it was still barely registering anywhere else outside New York.

Pamela Courson, who had lately started wearing a ring on her wedding finger and referring to herself as Mrs Morrison, now came to every show she could, increasingly bedevilled by the knowledge that each gig offered her 'husband' a thousand opportunities to leave the show with someone else. On this occasion she was accompanied by Tom Baker, a stage actor from New York who had recently worked with Norman Mailer on the short-lived Off-Broadway production of his novel *The Deer Park*.

Like Jim, Tom was a good-looking, fucked-up boy from a military family whose talent was only matched by his unquenchable thirst for booze, drugs and 'good times'. The next time The Doors left town, Pam began a very public affair with Baker – payback, perhaps, for Jim's own barely concealed

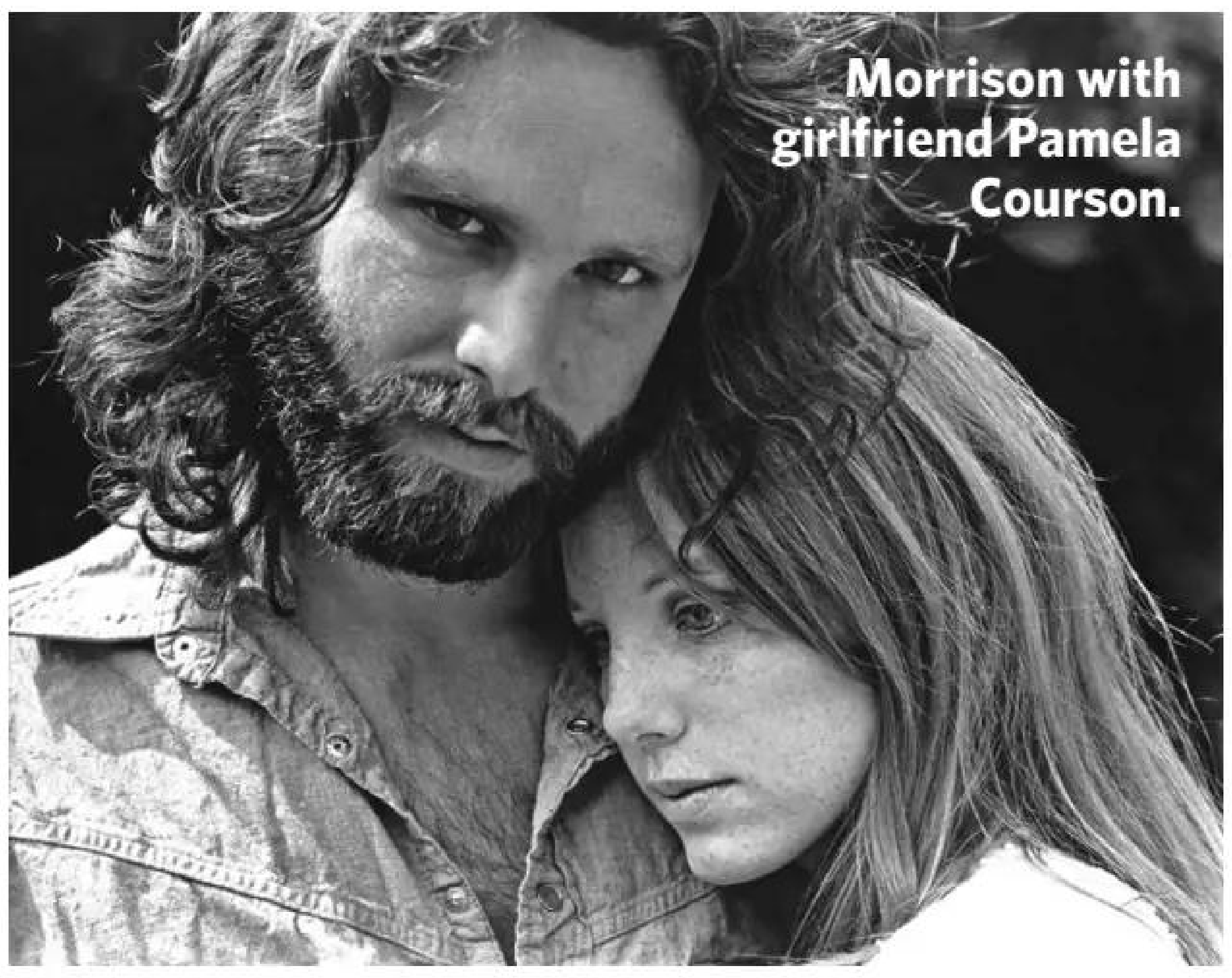
GETTY X3

infidelities. Or just Pam proving that anything Jim could do, she could do better. As future Morrison biographer Jerry Hopkins observed, Pam was Jim's "mirror image with tits".

The following month The Doors were back for their third, and final, residency at Ondine's, three weeks of shows that would see them playing three sets a night, five nights a week. The quality of the shows differed each night, each set, each number sometimes, depending on the condition Jim was in. Livid with rage at Pam's affair with Tom Baker, it was this energy that helped fuel some of his most intense performances with The Doors.

The band was also reaching a new, dizzying peak, in a hurry to include new works-in-progress into the set such as *People Are Strange*, a new, more finessed version of *Moonlight Drive* and, especially, what looked to be a sequel to *The End*, a whale song of environmental despair called *When The Music's Over*. Like its witchy precursor, some nights it would stretch and contort to 10, 15 minutes, sometimes even longer; Jim improvising more poetry over the top, adding new lines, new verses, new worlds each time they performed it, the rafters of the tiny club's ceiling seeming to enclose his head in a wooden crown, the band hypnotised over their instruments like medieval monks in rapture at their illuminations.

With Elektra getting ready to release the new, AM radio-friendly, edited-down version of *Light My Fire* as their next single, the band were also expected to make the most of their off-time in New York too: more photo sessions, more interviews than ever before. And of course, for Jim at least, more drink, more drugs and more women. Standing at the bar each night between sets, he'd throw back double shots of vodka and orange while gobbling up every pill, powder and potion the various hangers-on were only too eager to pass his way.



Morrison with girlfriend Pamela Courson.

CAN YOU PICTURE WHAT WILL BE?
THE DOORS

"Self-destruction and creativity don't *have* to come in the same package."

John Densmore

In his black leather suit, his tea-coloured hair falling in angelic ringlets about his, for once, cleanly shaven face, he looked exactly as he did in the recently published Joel Brodsky 'Young Lion' shots, nailed to the cross of his own doomed beauty.

But despite The Doors giving some of the most powerful performances of their short career, Jim Morrison's off-stage life was already going to hell. He may have still looked like an angel from some decadent rock heaven, but inside he was fighting just to keep his head above the dark waters he now found himself in, caught between his own idealised vision of himself as a hedonistic poet and artist, the latest, maybe greatest, guardian of rock's philosopher's stone, and the more realistic expectations of a record company, Elektra, who were about to enjoy the biggest record sales success of their existence with *Light My Fire*, soon to be the biggest hit of the biggest summer in rock. Ever.

Meanwhile, the rest of The Doors could only look on and wonder 'what if'. As John Densmore ruefully remarked when we spoke in 2012: "You know, self-destruction and creativity don't have to come in the same package. Picasso lived to be ninety-one. But in Jim they came together so I had to accept it. We all had to. That was the card we were dealt as a band." Or as Robby Krieger put it: "With Jim, it wasn't always easy. It was worth it because of the stuff that we got. But it would have been a lot easier if he'd been just a *normal* genius. You know?"

But no one else wanted Jim to be a "normal genius". They just wanted what they got: Jim Phoenix, ready to be shot down in flames.

It's the image – the fire fully lit – that would finally set The Doors on their way on their journey into night, and one that resonates still, half a century later.

Mick Wall's Love Becomes A Funeral Pyre: A Biography Of The Doors is available now as an Orion paperback

THE STORIES BEHIND THE SONGS

The Doors

Light My Fire

Although it was the spark that set the career of the then-struggling Doors alight, Jim Morrison, irked by it not being one of his songs, thought it was throwaway.

Words: **Mick Wall**

Saturday August 5, 1967. The hottest hit of the summer, *Light My Fire*, begins its second week at No.1 on the US *Billboard* chart. A colossal moment not just for The Doors – the tripped-out, LA-noir four-piece bringing arthouse cinema and beat poetry to rock – but also for the whole history of late-20th-century music.

Officially, the summer of '67 is about *Sgt. Pepper*, the Monterey festival and wearing flowers in your hair. Other singles in the American Top 10 that week include the equally immortal *All You Need Is Love*, *A Whiter Shade Of Pale* and *White Rabbit*. But The Doors are not about summer or love; The Doors are about rock apocalypse. The only love-love-love they chorus of, is the one burning on a funeral pyre. As Doors singer Jim Morrison yowled like a wildcat: '*Come on baby light my fire/Try to set the night on… FIRE!*'

Light My Fire was less Summer Of Love, more winter in hell. It had originated a year before, when The Doors were the $40-a-night house band at the Fog, a flea haven on Sunset. The stage stood above a wooden shack that served as the toilets. Playing five sets a night, four nights a week to empty rooms, the band began noodling, then experimenting, then creating forked lightning. First to benefit was a two-minute jingle-jangle called *The End*, now transformed into a lengthy Indian acid-rock raga.

Then there was *Light My Fire*, which guitarist Robby Krieger had come up with on his own after Morrison had chastised him for not writing more. Already at the Fog they had the bossa nova rhythm, the cascading Bach-like filigree intro and the extended phantom-of-the-opera instrumental section, Morrison crooning over it like an attentive vampire lover before the whole thing swirls into a gothic entanglement between the Light and the Dark. That's how it appeared to Morrison and keyboard player Ray Manzarek, anyway, tripping on the purest Owsley acid. Or, as Morrison put it in his stoned-immaculate purr: "Our music can move people to a kind of emotional orgasm. For me it's stirring, satisfying…"

On The Doors' self-titled debut album, released in January 1967, *Light My Fire* was a little over seven minutes long. This was hard-core rock vérité, yet it was catchy. However, Elektra Records founder Jac Holzman, who signed The Doors, initially refused to release an edited version of it as a single. "I was counting on the crush of interest from [album-oriented] FM radio forcing [Top 40-oriented] AM radio to play it," he said.

The band hit the road, and, just as Holzman predicted, *Light My Fire* swiftly became an FM staple, where you could hear the whole seven-minutes-plus in stereo. By the time Holzman made his move in April and released the heavily-edited 2min 52sec *Light My Fire* single, the album was selling 10,000 copies a month. Suddenly it was photo sessions, interviews, groupies, money. "Suddenly it felt like we could do anything," Manzarek said.

> **"Our music can move people to a kind of emotional orgasm. For me it's stirring, satisfying."**

This was 23-year-old Jim Morrison in his 'young lion' plume: black leather pants, hair a halo of ringlets, the newest, grooviest pop icon, arms outstretched in mock-crucifixion pose. A martyr to the muse, forcing open the doors of perception by any means available: acid, booze, weed, speed, and eventually coke and heroin. While hanging from hotel balconies and reciting immortal poetry.

As drummer John Densmore remarked ruefully: "Self-destruction and creativity don't have to come in the same package… But in Jim they came together so we had to accept it." Or as Krieger put it: "It would have been a lot easier if Jim had been just a normal genius."

In July, when they made their first big TV appearance, miming to *Light My Fire* on *American Bandstand*, its host Dick Clark declared them "The biggest, most fantastically successful group in the coming year – The Doors!"

The darkness was never far off, however. Morrison hated Krieger for having written *Light My Fire*. Everywhere Morrison went, people kept congratulating him for writing a song he'd struggled to learn the lyrics of, considering it a throwaway.

By September, both *Light My Fire* and The Doors had topped the US charts. At their shows, teenage girls now outnumbered the freaks.

A fortnight later The Doors made their fateful appearance performing *Light My Fire* live on *The Ed Sullivan Show* – complete with Morrison's broken promise to Sullivan not to sing the line: '*Girl, we couldn't get much higher.*' Sullivan went ballistic, yelling that The Doors would never do the show again. Morrison shrugged: "Hey, man, we just did *The Ed Sullivan Show*."

Sullivan was not the only showbiz sultan gunning for Morrison after *Light My Fire*. The other was superstar Frank Sinatra. Two of Sinatra's big hits in 1966 – *Strangers In The Night* and *That's Life* – had wowed Morrison with how seamlessly Sinatra went from fierce sexy growl to bedside intimacy, and began mimicking Sinatra's low-slung serenade, most obviously on *Light My Fire*. When the Mob-connected Sinatra heard *Light My Fire*, he was so convinced Morrison had ripped him off, he snapped: "We ought to let that guy have an accident."

Too late. For The Doors, *Light My Fire* had changed everything. By the end of '67, each band member had pocketed $50,000 (around $450,000 today).

There were other perks too. When *Light My Fire* went to No.1, Holzman invited them to choose a gift each to celebrate. Krieger and Manzarek got state-of-the-art reel-to-reel tape recorders, Densmore got a thoroughbred racehorse. Morrison, that famously vagabond free spirit, demanded and got a Gulfstream aqua blue Ford Mustang Shelby GT 500 with all-black interior. He jumped into the driver's seat and roared off down Sunset. Determined, as always, to set the night on fire. ❼

THE DOORS
LIGHT MY FIRE
THE CRYSTAL SHIP
Hit-ton

COVER UPS

There have been dozens of covers of *Light My Fire*, starting with Jose Feliciano's MOR classic that also went to No.1 in the US in 1968. More recent was *Pop Idol* winner Will Young's vanilla-nice version, which gave Doors fans the ick but hit No.1 in the UK in 2002.

In between, who could possibly forget disco-diva Ami Stewart's great-to-dance-to-when-shitfaced version from 1979? If that sounds weird, wait until you hear Stevie Wonder's sleek 1969 superfly version. Or, crazier still, Shirley Bassey's bad-ass funk-fest iced with 007-orchestration version from 1999. Those are just a few.

Then there was Eddie Vedder solemnly intoning with The Doors at the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame in 1993. Similarly earnest, Creed's Scott Stapp in 2000, for 'The Doors' episode of VH-1's *Storytellers*, and Cult singer Ian Astbury's spirit-animal renditions during his tour with Krieger and Manzarek as The Doors Of The 21st Century in 2002.

MARK AND COLLEEN HAYWARD/GETTY

Lighting a fire in 1967: (clockwise from top left) Ray Manzarek, John Densmore, Jim Morrison, Robby Krieger.

THE FACTS

RELEASE DATE
April 24, 1967

HIGHEST CHART POSITION
UK No.7,
US No.1

PERSONNEL
Jim Morrison
Vocals
Robby Krieger
Guitars
Ray Manzarek
Keyboards
John Densmore
Drums
Plus Wrecking Crew bassist Larry Knechtal, uncredited

WRITTEN BY
Officially credited to all four Doors, but written solely by Robby Krieger

PRODUCED BY
Paul A Rothschild

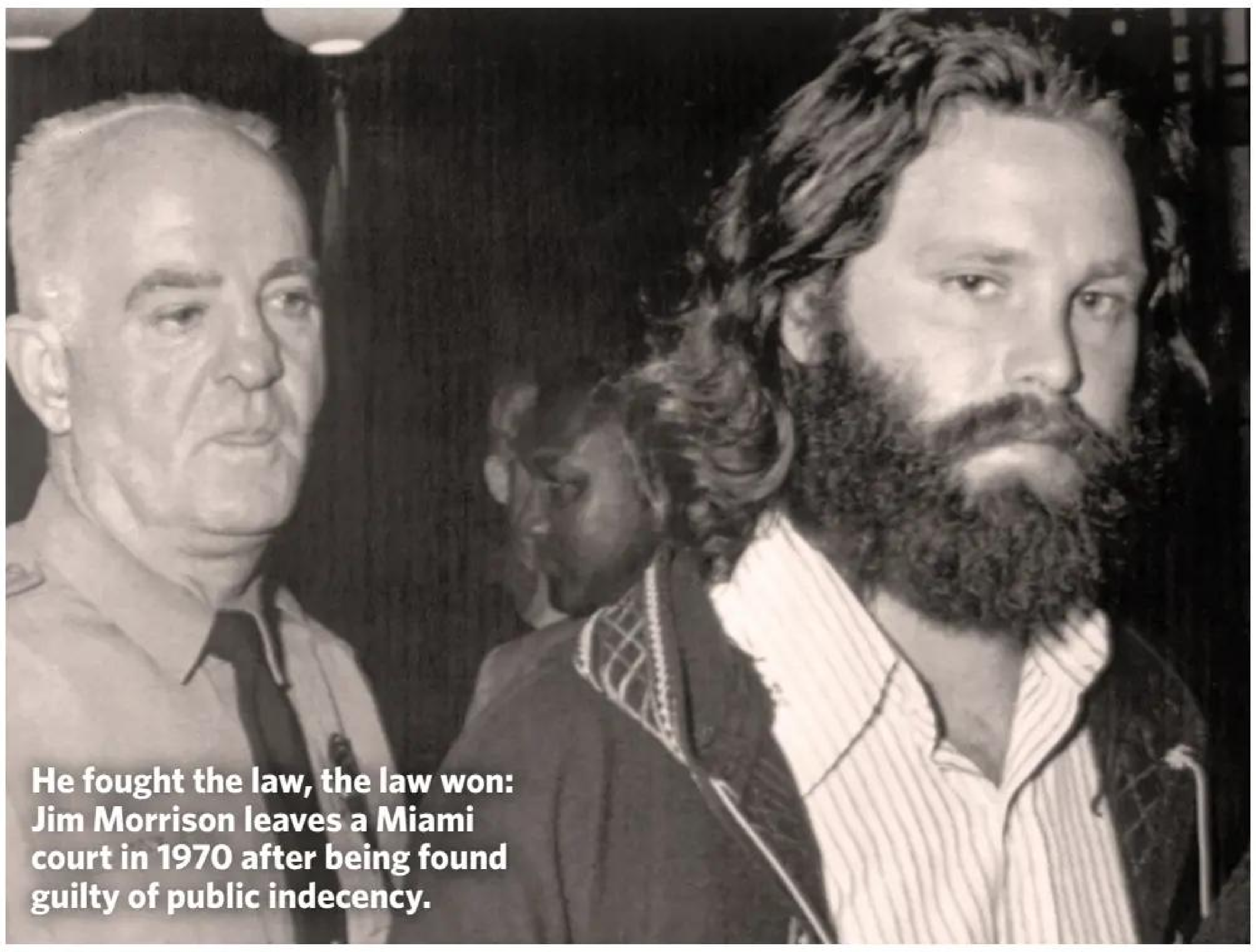
LABEL
Elektra

The Chang

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

Breaking on through to the other side of Jim Morrison. In 2007, Ray Manzarek, Robby Krieger, John Densmore and producer Bruce Botnick told the story of the man and the myth.

Words: **Geoff Barton**



He fought the law, the law won: Jim Morrison leaves a Miami court in 1970 after being found guilty of public indecency.

ASSOCIATED PRESS/ALAMY

Jim Morrison's star burned brightly but faded fast. In the space of just three-and-a-half years, his band The Doors released six studio albums plus the searing in-concert recording *Absolutely Live*. It was a quickfire period of dazzling musical creativity that has never been bettered. From their self-titled debut in January 1967 to their 1971 swansong, *L.A. Woman*, The Doors' dark powers scarcely wavered.

During this tantalisingly brief time Morrison, the Los Angeles band's talismanic leader, metamorphosed from a sultry, bare-chested Adonis – a prophet, a seer, a sage for the modern rock'n'roll age – into a shambling, bloated drunk. His deterioration was rapid and worrisome. The slinky Lizard King turned into a drawling king snake. Mr Mojo Risin became Mr Mojo Riesling, his miraculous poems reduced to hazy slurs on a parched tongue.

Whether it's in former Doors confidante Danny Sugerman's compelling book *No One Here Gets Out Alive* or in Oliver Stone's controversial *The Doors* movie, or any amount of cash-ins and trash-ins in-between, Morrison's desperate decline has been analysed and dissected to pieces. Arrests, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, police harassment, fuck mother, kill father… you name it, the coals have been raked over so often they've turned into brittle dust. And in the middle of it all, on the Moonlight Drive to hell and back, The Doors' sorcerous music has frequently taken a back seat.

In Morrison's final days he zipped up his trademark leather strides – just – grew a big buffalo beard and spent plenty of time slumped in the chair of a recording studio. Then he took the first – and last – plane to Paris. You didn't live much faster or die much younger than Jimbo.

Amazingly, 2007 marked the 40th anniversary of the release of the first Doors album. Certainly to Ray Manzarek, The Doors' keyboard player, everything still seems like yesterday. "Your mind can take you right back there," he say, sitting brisk and businesslike on a white leather sofa in a trendy central London hotel. Manzarek is 69 years old now but he looks in his mid-50s. This ain't no confused psychedelic grandad. He's as sharp as tacks and his mind is as clear as a crystal ship.

"Now that I'm talking about the 40th anniversary," Manzarek continues, "I'm back there in 1967, '68, '69, the 70s, 'til Jim passed on. When you step back and think about it, it's like: 'Boy! That was a long time ago, wasn't it? Forty years!' Certainly a long period of time. But hey, that's the trick of the human brain."

It's been an intriguing exercise, piecing together fragments of memory from not only Manzarek but also Doors guitarist Robby Krieger, drummer John Densmore and the band's engineer/producer Bruce Botnick during a series of interviews. Without exception, the four talk about the strange days of the long-distant past with a mix of wistfulness and affection. There's only a hint of bitterness at the way Jim Morrison manhandled his demise. There's precious little ruefulness and a lot of respect. But there's also a hint of empty longing, a feeling of what might have been.

"To us, he was just Jim because we saw him every day," says Robby Krieger, as small as Manzarek is tall, sitting hunched on that same sofa 24 hours earlier. "But he definitely had an effect on people. If you didn't know him, he could really get to you. He was the most influential figure in my life. He could make you believe he was your best friend after five minutes of talking to him.

"But, you know, I wasn't overly impressed when I first met Jim," he admits. "He came over to my house, I played some slide guitar for him and he just seemed like a normal guy. It wasn't until we had our first rehearsal a couple of days later that we got a glimpse of his other side.

"After the rehearsal a guy came back to our house and… I think it was some dope deal gone bad. Jim jumped on this guy and practically killed him. I said: 'This is our lead singer? Jesus Christ!'"

"What were my first impressions of Jim?" wonders John Densmore down a murky transatlantic phone line. "He was shy. Incredibly handsome. He was really smart and interesting. I did sense there was something special about him. But as time went on and his self-

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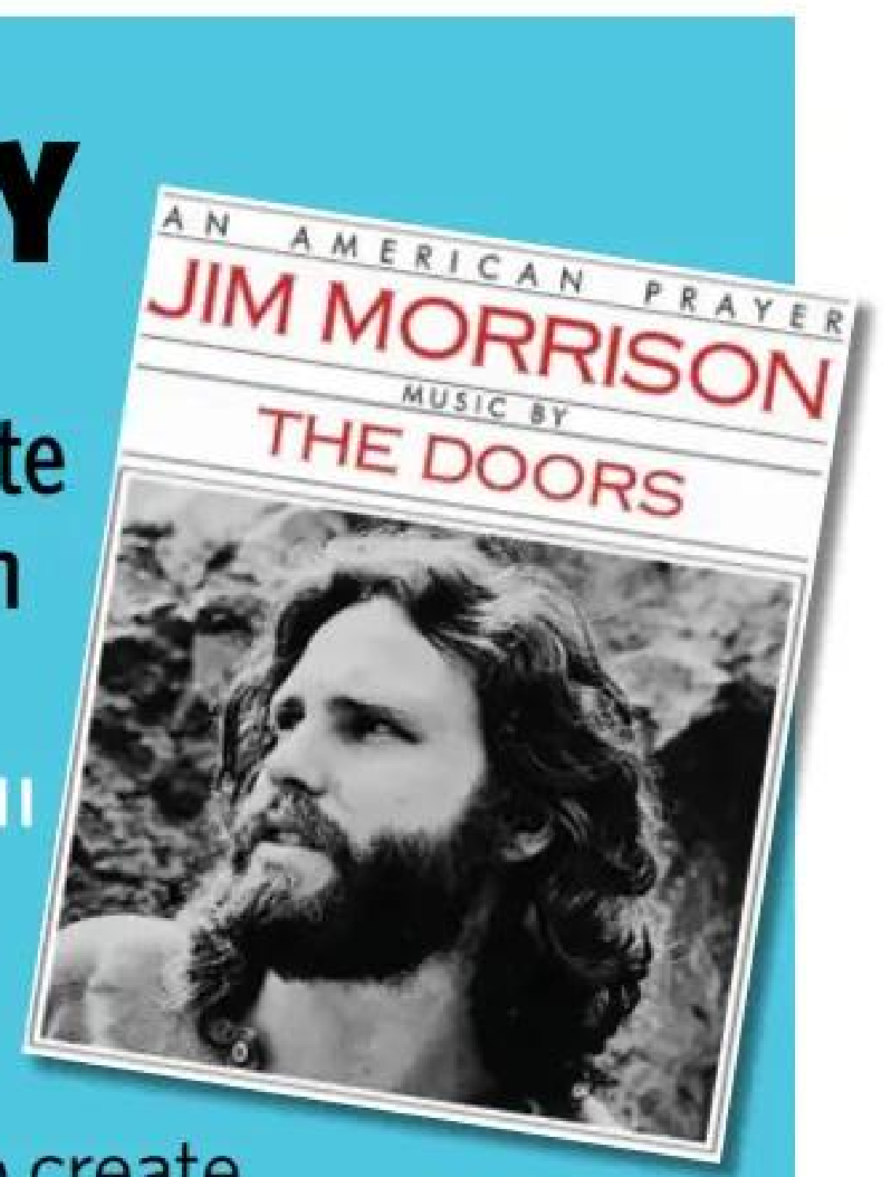
jeling

LET US PRAY

No Doors album collection is complete without a copy of An American Prayer.



In 1978 Ray Manzarek, Robby Krieger and John Densmore reunited to create fresh Doors sounds over old recordings of Jim Morrison reciting poetry. The resultant album, *An American Prayer,* is a real curio, showcasing both the best and the worst of Jimbo the bard.

In truth, the new music the surviving members of The Doors came up with isn't much cop, veering between soft jazz and muzak. But somehow its sheer inoffensiveness is the perfect counterpoint to Morrison's inebriated diatribes.

Perhaps more so than any 'official' Doors album, *An American Prayer* provides an intimate insight into Morrison's persona. The poems were recorded toward the end of his career and he sounds soothing and intimate one minute, world-weary and garbled the next. He's stoned but far from immaculate.

An American Prayer has been described as sounding like a porn-movie soundtrack in parts, and with lines like *'Her cunt gripped him like a warm, friendly hand'* we'd have to agree.

But our favourite track is *Lament,* where Morrison rambles on at length about his knackered penis: *'All join now and lament the death of my cock.'* The Lizard King at his most ludicrous, you might think. But prepare to be chilled to the marrow when he growls: '*I pressed her thigh and death smiled.'*

The Doors at their height: "They were firing on all cylinders. Everyone was Jim's best friend."

PICTORIAL PRESS LTD/ALAMY. RIGHT: BETTMANN/GETTY

destruction increased,I retreated from it all. I didn't approve of it. That's why I pulled away."

"Yeah, Jim was quite shy," confirms Bruce Botnick via another transatlanic link. "And he was very introspective. He always kept his poetry book with him. He was always writing in it. He was very quiet. Jim was always quiet."

So far, so surprising. This isn't the Morrison of legend, the penis-flourishing, beer-gutted, shit-faced shaman of rock's scandal sheets. This is someone different. Someone human.

We ask Krieger: what was the craziest thing you ever saw Morrison do? And for a while, we're right back there in the house of ill repute.

"Probably the time Jim just walked around a little ledge on top of a building," says the somewhat taciturn six-stringer. "It was the 9000 Building [9000 Sunset Boulevard] where The Doors office used to be. It was 15 storeys high and there was a ledge about that wide that went all the way round the outside. And Jim bet somebody he could walk right around it… drunk on his arse." When was this? "Maybe during the third album [*Waiting For The Sun*] or something like that."

"In The Doors movie they called the ledge incident 'Jim's Death Run'. Which it certainly could've been," Manzarek states plainly.

Botnick, however, offers a different take. "The craziest thing I ever saw Jim do? When he lay down on the floor in the living room of my house and watched a movie."

Because it was comparatively normal?

"By and large Jim was very, very normal. He only went mad when he was inebriated or chemically enhanced. When he was his unaffected self, it was a different story. When The Doors played live, Jim'd go crazy and swing on ropes in theatres like Tarzan. It was very effective and dramatic, but you have to realise he was out of his mind when he did it.

"Without alcohol, which actually was Jim's favourite drug, he wouldn't have done that stuff. In the early days he always performed with his back to the crowd. He was that embarrassed. All singers deal with being on stage differently. Some can handle it real well, some can't. And to begin with, Jim couldn't."

Densmore, a man in the eye of the storm, offers his perspective: "One time in the early days when we were riding around in my car, talking about how to get the band launched, Jim pulled out a quarter and said: 'Watch this.' And he popped the coin into his mouth and swallowed it. [Laughs]. That's not a real crazy thing, just a hint that he could be really out of it. I don't mean to explode Jim's myth but there's another side to him that's maybe been lost down the years."

At the beginning of this story we made reference to The Doors' astonishing burst of genius between 1967 and '71. Their career was meteoric but, compared to the likes of The Rolling Stones, it was also ephemeral. And, of course, it all came to an untimely end on July 3, 1971, when Pamela Courson found her 27-year-old boyfriend all washed up in a bathtub at No.17 Rue Beautreillis, the pair's Paris apartment.

But even as Morrison took the longest of long holidays, the Doors bandwagon continued to rumble on. Back in L'America their latest album *L.A. Woman* was being hailed as a masterpiece of corrosive, psychedelic blues. The critical plaudits were gushing in like the waves on Riders On The Storm. And they've barely ebbed to this day.

"Yeah, we released a lot of albums in a short space of time. We just kinda kept going, y'know?" muses Krieger. "But in a way we wanted to do as much as we could, because… [voice trails off]. I remember one day when our producer, Paul Rothchild, sat us down, just the three of us, John, Ray and I, and said: 'Listen, we've got to record as much as we can because Jim might not be around for all that long.' And I hadn't really thought about it before. But it was the truth."

Botnick – who engineered the first five Doors studio albums and then produced their tour de force, *L.A. Woman* – shared Rothchild's misgivings about Jim's health prospects at the time. "Especially during the recording of *Waiting For The Sun*," he says. "The Doors were firing on all cylinders, they were super-popular and everyone was Jim's best friend. People were popping whatever [drugs] they had into Jim's mouth. He'd just open his mouth and swallow. So he was inebriated most of the time. Stoned most of the time. He was all over the place."

In Botnick's sleevenotes to a new 40th anniversary edition of *Waiting For The Sun*, he writes: 'It was entertaining, in an "Is he going to live to finish the record?" kind of way.' He also relates the tale of when a young Alice Cooper, who was hanging out with Frank Zappa And The Mothers Of Invention, met up with The Doors at Sunset Sound Recorders in Los Angeles: 'Both Jim and Alice were holding on to the upstairs studio's railing, dangling 20 feet off the floor from the second-floor landing. This was one of the spices that permeated the recording and gave *Waiting…* some of its special flavour.'

"It was definitely very possible," Botnick tells us now, "that if someone's hanging two storeys from a balcony, that they could fall and die. That's why I made that comment about the possibility of Jim not completing the record."

"Jim had a great line: 'In that year we were blessed by a great visitation of energy,'" says Manzarek. "Our visitation of energy lasted from October or so of 1966, when we started recording the first album, to the finish of *L.A. Woman*. Boy, we were creative. Everyone was just full of

Street life: The Doors playing outside Frankfurt Town Hall during their 1968 European tour.

youthful energy, full of vitality, full of LSD, full of love for their fellow man… and we wanted to change the world through making our music. There was a whole revolutionary aspect to everything we did.”

Although children of the 1960s, The Doors didn’t so much epitomise as subvert the peace-and-love ideals of the time. They didn’t spend their time shuffling down the streets of Santa Monica in Jesus sandals, wielding anti-war placards. Instead they sat out most of the Summer Of Love of 1967 in a gloomy echo chamber in Sunset Sound Recorders. No wonder the album they were making at the time – their second, *Strange Days* – turned out so damn eerie and hallucinatory.

“For me, the 60s would be summed up by folk-rock bands with jingly-jangly guitars like The Byrds,” says Manzarek. “What The Doors played was much more existential music. We were beholden to the beatniks and to Aldous Huxley… *The Doors Of Perception* and all that. Beholden to literature and the cinema. Kurosawa, Fellini, Ingmar Bergman… that’s where we belonged. Instead of being from UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles] we were from Bauhaus. The Doors were timeless. Are timeless. We’re from the 60s but we’re not of the 60s. We transcend that era.

“When we played the Roundhouse in London in 1968 with Jefferson Airplane, that was a perfect example of the difference between Los Angeles and San Francisco. Jefferson Airplane were a great band but they still had those jingly-jangly guitars. The Doors operated in a different space. You can see it on the DVD of the show [*The DoorsAre Open*]. Jim Morrison… just watch the guy. Holy shit, man. He’s possessed. There’sone point where he gets a look in his eye andthe camera is off to the side. Jim says: ‘We ain’tgot long to go, boss, no, we ain’t got long to go.’ Whoa, chilling! Chilling for me and chilling forthe audience.”

“Jim’s whole shaman thing only became apparent later, after people wrote books about us. To us, he was just the frontman”

Robby Krieger

Meanwhile, back in the echo chamber… “We were all meditating, except for Jim,” Botnick recalls. “Jim didn’t meditate so much as brood, I suppose. So we’d go in there, smoke a little bit of cannabis and pay our respects to the maharishi. It felt like a large room, a very large wooden room. It was a nice place to go. We’d have lunch in there. We’d just go in there and sit down on the floor.

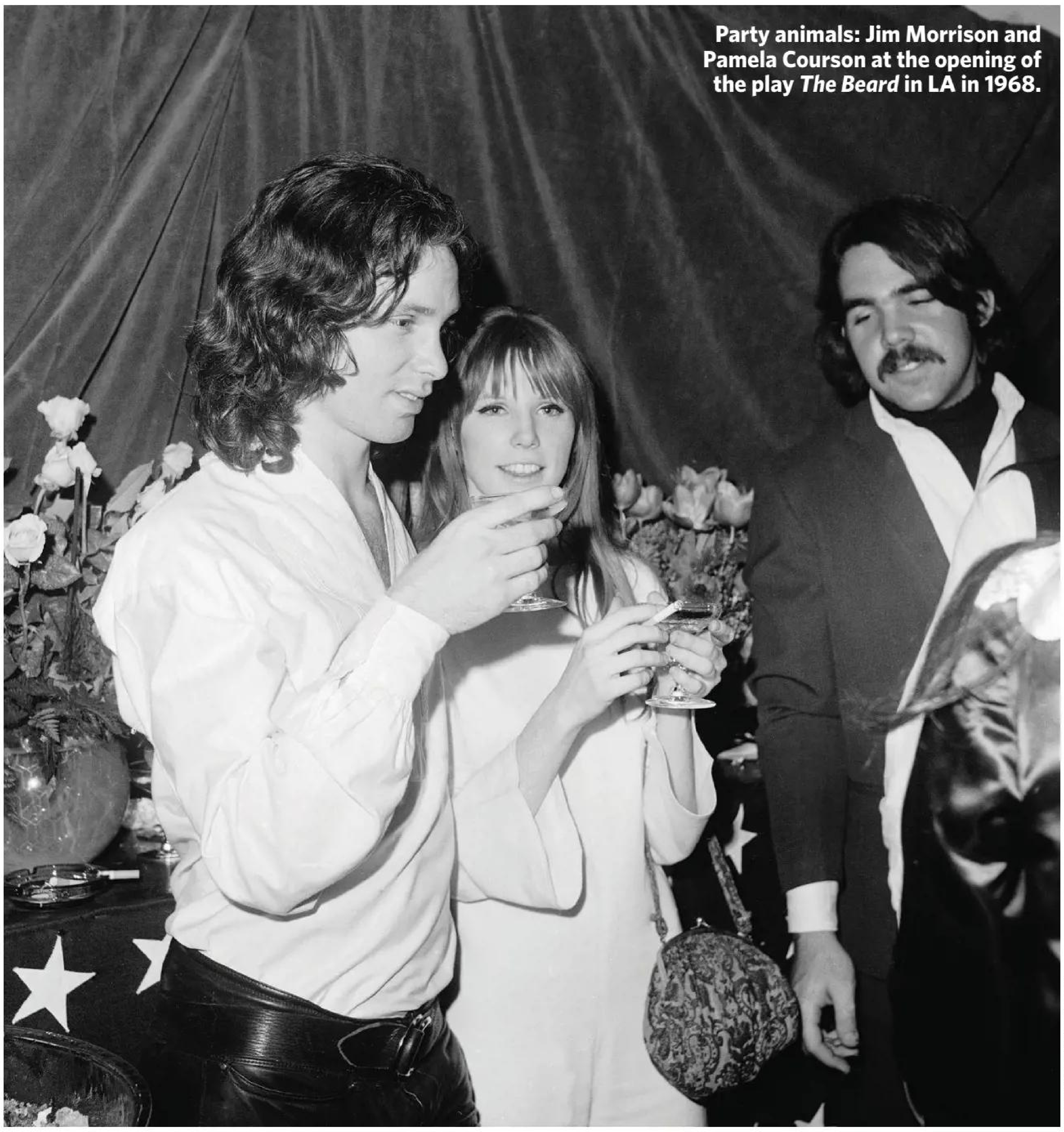
“The room had, like, a big refrigerator door. You could shut it and keep people out. In the dark we’d reach out psychically and feel the space. Although it’s been said, ‘If you can remember the 60s, you weren’t there,’ we were there. In the echo chamber.”

Have you ever revisited it?

“I haven’t been in there for at least 10 years. But I know that it’s still here. And I know they have a lock on it to keep people outta there.”

Jim Morrison, it turns out, loved being in the studio environment. For one thing, it stopped him from getting into trouble.

“For Jim, the studio was a safe place, a haven,” says Botnick. “Nobody was after him and he could just be alone with his music. When Jim was in the vocal booth, he never ▷



Party animals: Jim Morrison and Pamela Courson at the opening of the play *The Beard* in LA in 1968.

FOTOS INTERNATIONAL/GETTY

> **"We spent the Summer Of Love shut in the recording studio. Smoking cannabis and paying our respects to the maharishi"**
>
> **Bruce Botnick**

looked into the control room. He never looked at me or Paul [Rothchild]. He never saw us. He just looked straight ahead into the distance. So that was his place."

"We didn't go out on the road that much because Jim would get too out of hand," says Krieger. "So the studio was where we got most of our work done. Jim was usually pretty well behaved when we were recording. But live was where we really killed people.I always thought it was too bad that we never really got to tour like some bands did."

Manzarek: "The studio was Jim's laboratory. He was a flamboyant personality on stage in front of the public. But in the studio he was very erudite, very reserved. It was like his poetry was coming to life in his songs. He loved making records because it was such a contrast to the rigours of live performance. So we had both sides. There was definitely a yin and a yang. It was the scientist in the laboratory creating the music, and then this crazed shaman with his electric shamanist band, playing in front of thousands of people."

Ah, yes… shaman. 'A witch doctor or priest claiming to communicate with gods, et cetera,' so the dictionary says. Doors concerts were sometimes compared to shamanic, trance-inducing séances. And Morrison himself believed that the spirit of an American Indian – a shaman – entered his soul when, as a young boy, he witnessed a terrible auto accident. You probably know the tale. A truck had been involved in a collision and had overturned. Its occupants, a group of Native Americans, were lying on the road, bleeding to death.

Morrison recalled the mind-jarring events in the *Morrison Hotel* song, *Peace Frog*: '*Indians scattered on dawn's highway bleeding/Ghosts crowd the young child's fragile eggshell mind.*'

"You wanna talk about Jim's mystique?" asks Krieger somewhat bluntly. "That whole shaman thing only really became apparent later, after people wrote books about us and stuff. To us, Jim was the frontman of the group. Everybody wanted a piece of him, which was fine by us. We weren't jealous about that or anything. But a shaman? We didn't really think about that at the time."

"For me, Jim Morrison was my friend from UCLA and we put a rock'n'roll group together," Manzarek says. "The iconic Jim Morrison was not the Jim Morrison I knew. The iconic Jim Morrison was the one viewed from the outside."

Another aspect of Morrison's persona was 'Jimbo'. The obnoxious knucklehead he'd turn into when he was raging drunk. The beer drinker and hell raiser.

"I was young…" sighs Manzarek. "I was just too young. I didn't know about incipient alcoholism.I thought that alcoholics, for the most part, were a bunch of bums on skid row. And there were no detox centres. There wasn't anything. There was Synanon[a facility on the beach in Venice, Santa Monica, where junkies went to get clean] but I don't think there were any places where alcoholics could go."

If there had been such a thing as a Betty Ford Clinic around in the 60s, would Morrison have managed to clean up his act?

THE DOORS OF AFFECTION

Manzarek, Krieger and Densmore choose their favourite Doors songs.

Riders On The Storm
Changeling
the doors
THE DOORS
LIGHT MY FIRE
THE CRYSTAL SHIP
Hit-ton

Ray Manzarek: "*Riders On The Storm*. It's just so moody and mysterious. It's got the sound of rain falling… There's that great keyboard part… Overall, it's just a consummate Doors composition. It's an extremely cool song but it's also got a very, very dark spirit to it."

Robby Krieger: "*L.A. Woman*. The way that song came together was amazing. We just put it together in the studio one day. Normally I would bring in a song, or Jim would have an idea for a song, and then we'd all work it up. For *L.A. Woman* we were jamming around and Jim started singing the first verse: 'Well, I just got into town about an hour ago/ Took a look around, see which way the wind blow.' He recorded the vocals in the studio bathroom to nail the sound.

"Jim'd had an idea about Los Angeles being a woman, and it just grew. And the way he repeats the refrain *'Mr Mojo Risin'*… it gets faster and faster. It's got a lot of good guitar stuff, some good organ stuff – it's got everything a Doors song should have." (Like *Roadhouse Blues* it also uses that rare rock'n'roll word 'bungalows' in its lyrics.)

John Densmore: "*Light My Fire*. It was a great song for improvisation and we'd try to make it sound fresh every time. By contrast, a song like *The End* was draining to play because of the emotional concentration. It wasn't hard to play, but it was exhausting because the song was so powerful.

"What did I think about Jose Feliciano's version of *Light My Fire*? I really liked it. He did a good job. There's a little bit more saccharine in there but it's such a fresh approach."

Jim Morrison: "By and large he was very, very normal. He only went mad when he was inebriated."

PICTORIAL PRESS LTD/ALAMY

ELECTRA RECORDS/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

“We were full of vitality, full of LSD, full of love for our fellow man... and we wanted to change the world through our music.”

Ray Manzarek

“Well, that’s the big question, isn’t it?” ponders Densmore. “There have been artist like Eric Clapton making it cool to be clean and sober, but who knows? We just did not know Jim had a disease called alcoholism, so it’s an interesting speculation.I honestly don’t have an answer.”

“People think Jim drank because he was sick of his rock-star image and wanted to be just a regular guy, but it wasn’t like that,” says Krieger. “He just ate too much, drank too much… and that’s what happened. Jim had no control. The reason he looks so skinny in the early photographs was because he was taking so much acid – and you don’t eat on acid. It wasn’t as though he planned it that way.”

“Jim was just a human being,” says Botnick. “A lot of his supposed mystique is to do with mythology. To be honest with you, we didn’t pay much attention to it at the time.”

“I remember the exact moment when I thought: ‘Jim’s getting out of hand,’” says Densmore. “I wrote about it in my autobiography [*Riders On The Storm*]. It was when he purchased a lizard-skin suit. I thought: ‘Oh no – he’s buying his own myth!’ He thinks he’s the Lizard King. He thinks he can do anything.”

Manzarek remembers a converstion with Morrison where he said to the singer::“‘You’re drinking too much, you’re killing yourself. Look at you, you’re out of shape. You’re ruining your health, you better stop drinking!’ Jim said: ‘I know, I’m trying.’ And I said: ‘We’re here to help you, man. Anything you need, let us know.’

“But Jim never said: ‘Help me… help me, I’m falling.’ Instead he went back to alcohol. An alcoholic can only stop when he’s ready to stop, or when he’s hit rock bottom, or when he’s become so sick that he knows he’s got to stop. And none of that ever happened to Jim Morrison.

“Jim didn’t hit rock bottom, career-wise,” adds Manzarek. “He was still a great poet, it hadn’t affected his writing, he hadn’t run out of money… he just kept going the way he was. Unfortunately that was what killed him.”

One of the great attractions of The Doors is the coalescence of mysterious poetry and incandescent musicianship – with no full-time bass player required. How much did the surviving three members of the band relate to Morrison the bard? Did they empathise with Jim’s lyrics? Or were his words too personal, or too ambiguous, to get a handle on?

“It was not always easy to figure out what Jim was talking about – and he would never tell you, either,” says Krieger. “I just viewed it as art, mainly. I didn’t want to have to grill him about what the hell he was writing about.” ▷

Child's play: Jim shows his tender side with a friend's daughter.

RHINO/KOBAL/SHUTTERSTOCK

"You couldn't ask Jim: 'What does that word mean? What is that lyric? What is that line about?' He'd shake his head and go: 'No, no, n-o-o-o-o,'" says Manzarek. "But that's the secret of poetry. What it means to you and what it means to someone else may be entirely different. But does it make you think? Does it excite your mind? That's the point of Jim Morrison's poetry. But did I know what he was talking about froma Freudian level? Clues as to the depth of Jim Morrison? No."

"From day one I thought it was wild to have these really poetic words on top of rock'n'roll music," says Densmore. "I said to Jim: 'This is unique. This is hot.' As soon as I heard his lyrics to *Break On Through (To The Other Side)* [the opening track on debut album *The Doors*]: *'You know the day destroys the night/Night divides the day/Tried to run/Tried to hide/Break on throughto the other side'* … I was ready to do it. Those wordsare just so rhythmic, and as a drummer I was raring to go."

When, in July 1971, Doors manager Bill Siddons took that fateful transatlantic phone call from Pamela Courson in Paris, neither Robby Krieger nor Ray Manzarek believed Jim Morrison had died.

"People said that kind of stuff about Jim all the time," says Krieger. "I told Bill to fly to Paris and check it out. He came back and said it was true."

"I was at home having breakfast," recalls Manzarek. "Bill phoned and said: 'I think Jim is dead.' I said:'I don't think so.' Bill said: 'No, no, it sounds like it's real this time.' And I said: 'Listen, Jim has died half a dozen times already…'"

John Densmore was more realistic about Morrison's prospects – or lack of them. "Well…" he considers. "I'd hoped Jim might be an Irish drunk who lived to be 80, but then the reality of it hit home. Because Jim was so tortured, I thought: 'Well, maybe it's true, maybe he's at peace.'"

Bruce Botnick says he knew the truth straight away. "I was in the studio, screwing around with some songs, trying to get some ideas together, hoping Jim was going to come back [from France]. WhenI heard that he'd died, I believed it. Unfortunately,I did. The difference on that occasion was that Jim wasn't in the country. Every time we'd heard rumours of his death before, he'd been a few blocks away. So you never got the feeling that he was really dead.

> **"I accept Jim's destruction now. I don't like those rumours about him still being alive. Ray Manzarek might still be propagating them. Not me"**
>
> **John Densmore**

"But I knew how many times he'd come close to dying before. He could've fallen off the top of a building or taken an overdose. Just gone to sleep and never wakened."

If you've ever made the pilgrimage to Morrison's grave in the poets' corner of the famous Père Lachaise cemetery in eastern Paris, chances are that among the mourners – and believe us, to this day there will still be mourners – someone will be whispering: "He's not really buried there, you know."

Ray Manzarek takes up the story. "…So Bill Siddons went to Paris and a few days later he called me and said: 'We buried Jim Morrison in a sealed coffin.'

"I said: 'Wait a minute – how did he look?'

"Bill said: 'I don't know, it was a sealed coffin. It was all in French, I couldn't read it. But he's dead. He was in there.'

"I said: 'You never opened the coffin and took a look at Jim Morrison's body?'

"Bill said: 'No, but I know he was in there because Pam [Courson] was crying.'

"I said: 'That's got nothing to do with it, man. Pam cries anyway – she's a hysteric. Are you sure there's not just a load of bricks and sand in there? I tell you what, people are gonna start to speculate that Jim Morrison staged his own death. And sure enough – here we are, decades later, and we're talking about the death of Jim Morrison."

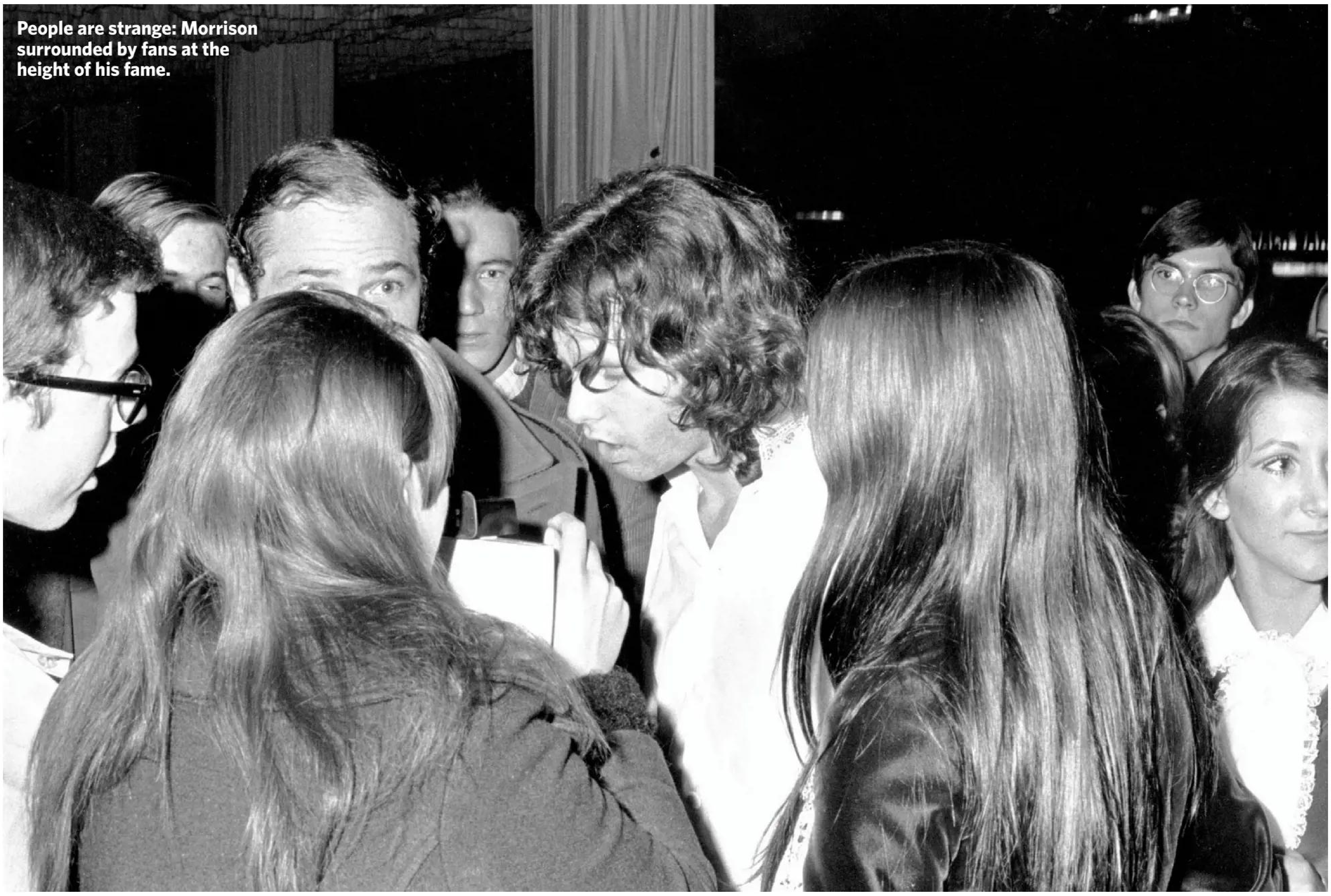
When Manzarek visited the Paris cemetery himself, the keyboardist was reported by onlookers as saying: "Jim's not there."

Don't look down: Jim Morrison, living life on the edge.

FRANK BEZ/SHUTTERSTOCK

Jim Morrison: December 8, 1943 – July 3, 1971.

ARCHIVE PL/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



People are strange: Morrison surrounded by fans at the height of his fame.

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

"Well, it didn't feel like it to me, you know," he sighs now when reminded of his outburst in Paris. "I don't know, man. I don't know. I haven't heard from him in many, many years, so I assume he's gone. I don't see how he could exist without playing music. The most important thing in his life was to sing in front of a rock'n'roll band. That's where he belonged. So for him not to have been doing that for the past 35 years… I assume he's gone."

John Densmore made a separate pilgrimage to the French capital. When he arrived at the cemetery he immediately thought Morrison's grave looked too short.

"Well, the grave was kinda of small – Jim was six feet or so," the drummer says. "But I didn't say that to imply he wasn't in there. I don't like those rumours. Ray might still be propagating them. Not me.

"The fact is, Jim was a drunk and he had serious problems. I loved him for his creativity, but it really was tough living with him. But time heals. I accept Jim's destruction now. He was meant to make a big impact in a short period of time. That was his role."

"There's a lot of people who have come and gone like the burst of a supernova," Botnick says, "and Jim was the best of them. It's kind of hard to imagine him being alive today and doing all the classic songs. That's why a lot of old rock'n'rollers have a tough time of it, because no one believes in them any more. I think Jim knew that. He didn't want to be doing that all his life."

If Jim Morrison hadn't died, how long could The Doors have carried on?

"Well," Krieger replies, "we could have been going today. Or we could have stopped. Who knows? When Jim went to Paris, I fully expected that he would be coming back and we'd be recording again. But he never came back."

"I hoped we'd last 10 years or whatever," says Densmore. "I knew we were searchers, y'know, butI don't want to take it much further than that. What was Jim's line? 'We could plan a murder, or start a religion.' I don't want to start preaching here – or start a religion [laughs]. As a band, we just worked real hard on making things sound as unique as possible. Then it came to an end."

"If Jim could've stopped his drinking, The Doors would be doing all kinds of exciting things today," insists Manzarek. "We would've slowed down a bit, obviously. But we'd still be active, I'm absolutely sure of it. We'd be making albums, maybe a new record every two or three years, when the songs were ready. We'd be doing movies, touring, all sorts of stuff. Jim writing his books of poetry, y'know… today. Why not? Why the hell not?"

IT WASN'T ALL RAY MANZAREK'S LEFT HAND

Think Jim Morrison and co never had a bass player? Think again.

"We always wanted someone to play the bass," says Doors guitarist Robby Krieger. "We just could never find the right guy. So Ray [Manzarek] played the basslines on the keyboard withhis left hand. We frequently used bass players on our albums,to add a bit of bottom end. But not when we toured. It justdidn't sound right."

Chief among The Doors' studio four-stringers was Doug Lubahn, who appeared on *Strange Days* and then shared bass duties with Kerry Magness and Leroy Vinnegar on *Waiting For The Sun*, and with Harvey Brooks on *The Soft Parade*. Jim Morrison would apparently chauffeur Lubahn to the studio each day in a battered Volkswagen. (Despite Krieger's assurances, the aforementioned Harvey Brooks apparently appeared on stage with The Doors at the Los Angeles Forum and New York's Madison Square Garden. Besides The Doors, Brooks played with Electric Flag and Miles Davis.)

Lubahn was a member of Clear Light, who like The Doors were signed to Elektra Records. He has written a book about his experiences with The Doors.

As for The Doors' other bass players, well… their 1967 debut album featured Larry Knechtel, who also worked with The Monkees, The Beach Boys, Billy Joel and Bread. Blues guitarist Lonnie Mack plucked out heavy-duty rhythms on two classic *Morrison Hotel* tracks: *Roadhouse Blues* and *Maggie McGill*. Elvis Presley bassist Jerry Scheff is all over *LA Woman*. There's more: Ray (Lovin' Spoonful) Neapolitan was also on *Morrison Hotel*… and that's not to mention the various guys who appeared on The Doors' post-Morrison albums, *Other Voices* and *Full Circle*. So, um, we won't.

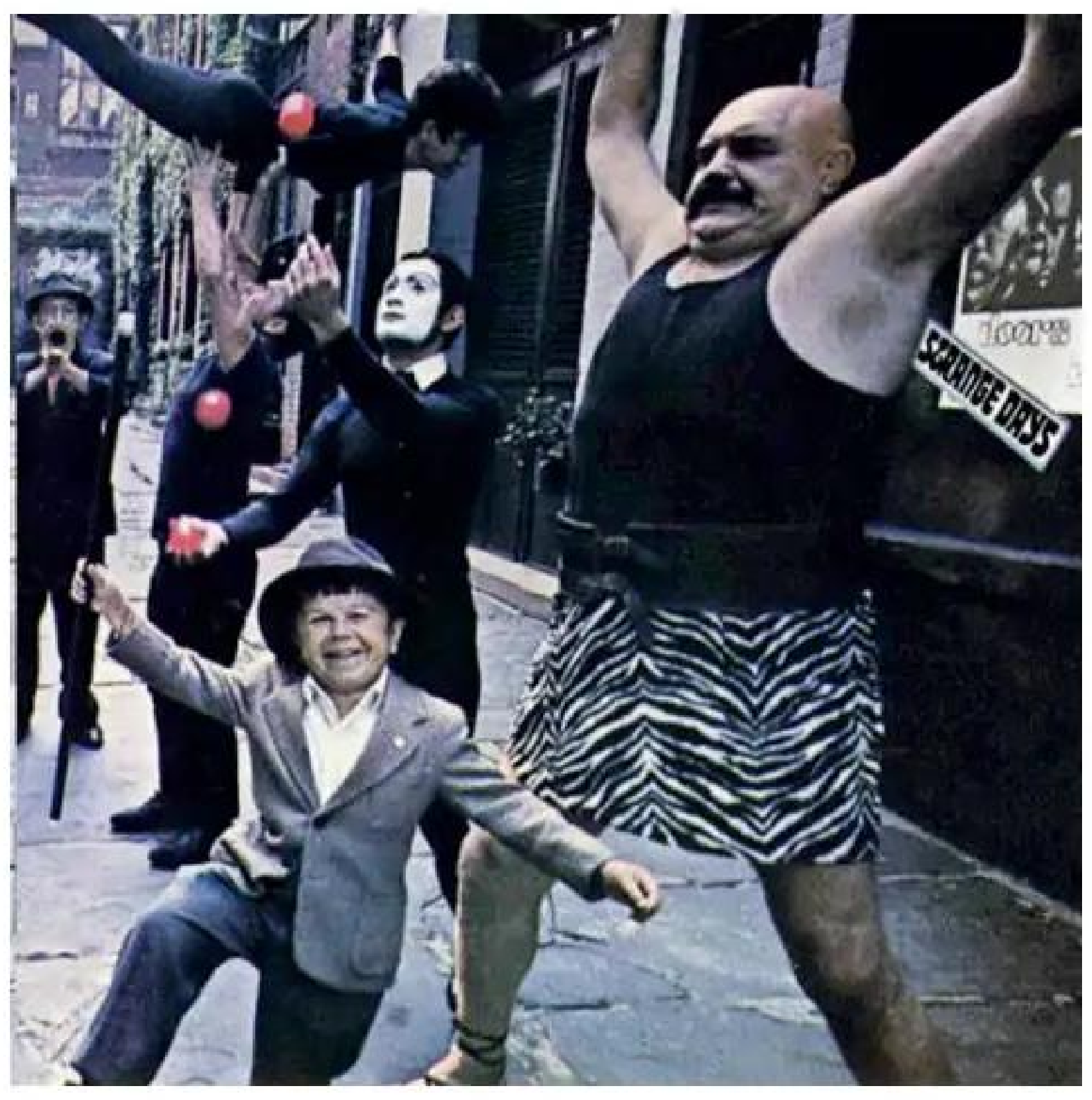
Year Of The Lizard

Words: **Mick Wall**

They started the Summer Of Love as a pop phenomeon and ended it in whirlwind of booze, LSD and out-of-control hedonism. Yet in between, **The Doors** still managed to make their unsung masterpiece. This is the story of *Strange Days* and the madness of Jim Morrison.

New York City, April 1967, Ondine Discotheque on 59th Street. Standing at the bar throwing back double shots of vodka and orange is Jim Morrison, 23-year-old singer of rising stars The Doors, who are halfway into their third residency at the club. In his new black leather suit, his tea-coloured hair falling in angelic ringlets about his face, Morrison looks exactly as he's remembered now, 45 years later: the iconic rock god in mock crucifixion pose, nailed to the cross of his own imperturbable beauty.

Looking on is pop artist and underground film-maker, Andy Warhol, who has been obsessively in thrall to Morrison since he first clapped eyes on him some months before. Warhol wants Morrison to appear in one of his films, naked and surrounded by Warhol's Factory 'girls', some of whom are not girls at all, nor even good facsimiles; some of whom, like Nico, are so ball-achingly beautiful Morrison will soon begin a brief, hopelessly doomed affair with her.



Warhol, never normally shy about introducing himself to the beautiful and the damned, can't bring himself to approach Morrison. He's too scared of what might happen if he interrupts the rock star from the attentions he's receiving from two equally enthralled female fans, one of whom has the singer's penis in her mouth while the other unbuttons her cheesecloth blouse so Morrison can drunkenly fondle her breasts.

"Oh gee," sighs Warhol, his stock response to any situation in which he finds himself reeling. "I guess I'll talk to Jim later…"

But later never comes, not on this trip anyway. Despite giving some of the most powerful performances of The Doors' short career, Morrison's offstage life is going to hell. He may look like a decadent angel, but inside he's fighting just to keep his head above the dark waters he now finds himself in. He's caught between his own idealised vision of himself as a hedonistic poet and artist and the earthier expectations of a record company, Elektra, who are about to enjoy the biggest success of their existence with *Light My Fire*, the second single lifted from The Doors' self-titled debut album that is on its way to becoming the fluke hit of the summer.

Though no one is saying it – at least not to the faces of the band themselves – Elektra and everyone else in the music business know this is The Doors' big break, and one they would be fools not to capitalise on by coming up with a convincing follow-up as soon as possible. Within a few weeks, The Doors will be flown back to Los Angeles and bundled into Sunset Sound studio, the featureless four-track bunker where they recorded their first album, and where, under pressure, they will start work on their second album. These sessions will be abandoned, as *Light My Fire* overtakes The Beatles to become the defining hit of this most intoxicating of summers, but not before The Doors have recorded two tracks that will become their next single and its B-side: *People Are Strange* and *Unhappy Girl*. Everybody is excited about the new songs. What nobody knows yet is that this is just the beginning of what will become much more than a rushed follow-up to a band's debut hit; that this album, *Strange Days,* will eventually become The Doors' unsung masterpiece.

But right now, Morrison is barely aware of his present, let alone his future. He might not know it, but standing at the bar of Ondine, only partly conscious as he throws back the booze, wheedles Quaaludes out of strangers and gets his ego massaged to orgasm, he has already begun his fast track ascent towards rock god status, and along with it, his personal descent into the quagmire.

When he's not drinking he's tripping, and when he's tripping he's still drinking. Torn apart by the wayward behaviour of his long-term girlfriend, Pamela Courson, who has begun sleeping with one of his drinking buddies back in LA, Morrison is roaming wild but not free. Each night he stays on at the club after The Doors have finished their set, drinking until he blacks out, at which point he is carried to a cab and driven back to the apartment on 45th Street. Most mornings he awakes to find at least one, sometimes two or three groupies sharing his bed: girls whose names he doesn't know or will ever bother to learn. One night at around 4am, while drunk and tripping, Morrison decides to pay a visit to Jac Holzman, the head of Elektra, pounding on the door to be let in while Jac and his family hide inside, fearing for their lives.

These are bad scenes, even for the anything-goes rock milieu of the late 1960s. Morrison doesn't care, though. The only thing he gives a fuck about, he says, are his music and his poetry. Meanwhile, the rest of The Doors – keyboardist Ray Manzarek, guitarist Robby Krieger and drummer John Densmore – can only look on and wonder 'what if?'.

"You know, self-destruction and creativity don't have to come in the same package," Densmore ruefully remarks now. "Picasso lived to be 90. But in Jim they came together so I had to accept it. We all had to. That was the card we were dealt as a band."

"With Jim, it wasn't always easy," adds Krieger. "It was worth it because of the stuff that we got. But it would have been a lot easier if he'd been just a normal genius."

Genius or not, Jim Morrison had never been what passed in the mid-20th century for a normal person. The eldest son of Rear Admiral George Morrison of the United States Navy, he grew up a well-educated but self-absorbed child who became a major disappointment to his father when, instead of following in the family

“With Jim, it wasn’t always easy. It would have been easier if he’d just been a normal genius.”
Robby Krieger

GETTY

ELAINE MAYES/GETTY IMAGES

Jim Morrison onstage and off at the Fantasy Fair in the Summer of 1967

footsteps and going to naval college, he plumped instead for a degree course in film studies in Los Angeles. This was where he met the professorial Ray Manzarek, another parental disappointment who'd already tried his hand at forming a rock group with his brothers. In 1965, Morrison sang Manzarek the opening verse to the song that became *Moonlight Drive*, while tripping on the beach at Venice. Manzarek famously "saw dollar signs" as Morrison crooned him his as-yet musically unaccompanied verse. Morrison, famously, saw only stars.

The band that they formed, The Doors, arrived just as rock was at its most fearsomely individualistic, before the rules of the road had been written. "We would make our own rules," Manzarek explains, his deep baritone booming down the line from his home in the Napa Valley in Northern California. "Because we have ingested LSD, we have opened the doors of perception. And we have seen that we are the equal, and perhaps better, of any generation that ever existed – that we could do anything. And we were so fuelled with life and possibilities that we were bursting at the seams, mentally and certainly semen-wise. We were bursting with life."

> **"LSD was a sacred sacrament, to be taken under the warmth of the sun. It wasn't a drug for entertainment."**
> **Ray Manzarek**

By the start of 1967, the first, self-titled Doors album was ready for release. Now acclaimed as a cornerstone moment in the history of rock, it wasn't until April of that year, when producer Paul Rothchild took the seven-minute Robby Krieger-penned *Light My Fire* and cut it in half for release as their second single – and their first No.1 – that The Doors became known outside what was then still an almost claustrophobic LA scene. It was also then that Jim Morrison, college dropout and hippy Hollywood maverick, began his transformation into the Lizard King – the alternate, take-no-prisoners, no-one-here-gets-out-alive rock-consciousness that would ultimately both build his legend and deprive him of his senses, until all that was left was a bloated body floating in a cold bathtub.

The success of *Light My Fire* coincided with Morrison's first public appearances in his new black leather outfit. Just six months before, the band had been depicted in promo shots wearing mod-style suits, their longish hair neatly styled. Now, with their first album smoking up the charts, they emerged on to the covers of magazines as the epitome of a darker, more mysterious kind of cool. Morrison's neo Gothic croon and Manzarek's ghostly, cathedral-like organ spoke of murkier climes than those offered by The Beatles' brand of polychromatic pop. If *Sgt Pepper* was the symbol of pop's raising from gutter-level singsong to symphonic high art, The Doors gave the lie to such positivism, drawing on the growing feeling of 'us against them' that pervaded a generation of young Americans in fear of the draft to Vietnam, or in protest against what they saw as the overarching dead hand of a society where long hair was now a symbol of angry defiance.

On the surface then, The Doors seemed to be on-message like no other band of the moment. Yet as Manzarek says, "There really were no plans. We were excited that our record was doing so well but that wasn't what was driving us forward. It was the thought of what we might do next. Suddenly it felt like we could do anything…"

Strange Days, then, would be aptly named. The first track they recorded, a song Morrison and Krieger had written together called *People Are Strange*, had been the result of a bad trip Morrison had needed Krieger to talk him down from at five o'clock one morning, at the tiny hilltop villa they shared in Laurel Canyon.

"He was talking about killing himself and all this stuff," Krieger recalls, his voice fragile as he whispers down the line from a hotel room in Miami, where he's on a promo tour for a new Doors DVD, *Live At The Hollywood Bowl*. "And so we decided to take a walk up to the top of Laurel Canyon. Like, 'Let's go up and watch the sun come up.' And when the sun came up he suddenly got this idea about the fact that when you're strange then people are strange. The whole idea just popped into his head – 'Oh, I got an idea for a song!', you know – and half an hour later we had it."

Not all such occasions ended so harmoniously though. Morrison loved Krieger, yet hated him too for having written *Light My Fire*. Everywhere the singer went, people slapped his back, thanking him for writing a song he'd struggled to learn the lyrics for and to get the metre right when he recorded it, seeing it as almost a throwaway. Not any more, though. And that fucked with his head, along with all the other things that would fuck with his head from hereon in.

The only way he could deal with it was to let it out, and to hell with the consequences. Arrested for public drunkenness on Sunset Strip one night during the original *Strange Days* sessions, Morrison begged another of LA's most famous teenage groupies, Miss P (aka Pamela Des Barres, future acquaintance of Jimmy Page and several others), to believe him when he said his rock star persona was "just a trip" and that really he was a sensitive poet. Janis Joplin didn't get that impression when Morrison suddenly forced her face into his crotch at another Hollywood party during the same period. When he tried to laugh it off, she broke a bottle of Southern Comfort over his head and called him an asshole. "I am an asshole!" he hollered after her as she stomped off, giving him the finger.

It was a relief when the initial *Strange Days* sessions were called to a halt while the band returned to the road to promote their big hit. Their young management team, themselves struggling to keep up with the demands brought on by their band's sudden unforeseen success, booked them gigs anywhere and everywhere. Anywhere and everywhere, that is, except for the biggest concert event of that long, purple-hazed summer: June's Monterrey Pop. It's something that still stings in the band's collective memory. "When Monterrey Pop was happening, we were stuck at the Scene Club in New York for three weeks," says Krieger offhandedly.

But to miss out on Monterrey, which took place in their own Californian back yard, and is now regarded as one of the most historic events in rock history – with a bill that included Jimi Hendrix, The Who and Ravi Shankar – that must have hurt more than a little?

"Oh yeah," he says, tremulously. "We were just… it was all new to us. If I had realised that fact I probably would have really been mad. But we didn't know Monterrey Pop was gonna become a huge, iconic concert. We had no clue."

What the band weren't told until later was that one of Monterrey Pop's chief organisers, Lou Adler – still apparently angry over the browbeating he'd received the year before from a typically drunk and foul-mouthed Morrison, in the wake of Adler's dismissal of one of the band's early demo tapes – was said to have put the block on The Doors getting on the bill.

As a result, despite their burgeoning success, The Doors had spent the Summer Of Love largely in New York, playing the Village Theater on Second Avenue (very soon to be renamed the Fillmore East when legendary promoter Bill Graham bought it) and other smaller venues.

Life magazine's critic Albert Goldman was so stunned by what he saw in The Doors that he switched overnight from writing about jazz to covering the emerging rock scene. Goldman, who would later become famous for his witheringly salacious biographies of Elvis Presley and John Lennon, wrote down Morrison's proclamations and presented them in *Life* as tablets brought down from the mountain of rock by the new Moses of music.

"We're really politicians," Morrison told Goldman, straight-faced. "You could call us erotic politicians… a Doors concert is really a public meeting called by us for a special kind of dramatic discussion and entertainment." The audience, he said, "go home and interact with their reality, then I get it all back by interacting with that reality".

Back in New York for more shows in July, Morrison, the self-anointed prophet of the Summer Of Love, began an impossible affair with his psychic and spiritual opposite – Nico, Teutonic ice-queen and co-vocalist with New York's most celebrated yet least famous band, the Velvet Underground. According to rock orthodoxy, the Velvet Underground and their followers – in particular, the Velvets' vituperative singer Lou Reed – despised everything The Doors stood for. When just four years later Reed heard of Morrison's death, he sneered: "He died in a bathtub? How fabulous…"

Yet in July 1967, Morrison appeared blissfully unaware of either Reed or his still unknown outfit of, as he would have seen it, Broadway dropouts and Bowery freaks. The Doors were now riding high, selling more records per week than the Velvets would manage in their entire career together, and when Morrison saw Nico he simply had to have her. He loved her platinum-blonde hair and her thick Berlin accent; loved that she was part of Warhol's coterie; that she'd spent time in Europe with arthouse film-maker Federico Fellini; that she was older than him and in control. Because of her crystal beauty and her metallic accent, others – including a jealous Reed – made fun, said she didn't have a heart like other women. But Nico now gave her heart to Jim Morrison. ➻

The Doors at New York club Steve Paul's The Scene, June 1967.

Steve Paul's THE Scene
VOX

GETTY

Behold the Lizard King: Morrison on stage in 1967.

GETTY

Two inches taller than him, broader shoulders, bigger legs and hips, when Nico sat on Morrison's face – which is what she liked doing best – he almost suffocated. The singer was used to crazy women, groupies and hangers-on, but Nico was different and Morrison offered to help write her songs, many of which later ended up on her solo album, *The Marble Index*. Songs with an undeniable Morrison flavour like *Lawns Of Dawns*, *Frozen Warnings* and *Evening Of Light* – none of which she would eventually offer him any credit for, on the record sleeve or in interviews.

When Nico dyed her platinum-white hair red – like Morrison's girlfriend Pamela Courson's – he burst into tears. "He was the first man I was in love with," Nico would later lament. "I wanted to please his taste… like a teenager or something."

Yet Morrison – who kept notebooks and journals where he routinely wrote down versions of everything that happened to him as poems or just scraps of ideas – never once mentioned Nico's name in his secret diaries. It was as if she never really existed outside his own tripped-out fantasies.

In the end, it only lasted a month or so. Pamela Courson knew where Morrison was, and whom he was with. When she started a very public affair of her own with Hollywood actor John Phillip Law, Morrison finally came to his senses. Early one morning, while Nico was still asleep, Morrison got in his car and drove back to LA, and Courson. Nico, utterly distraught, flew back to New York, where she dyed her hair an even darker shade of hell red.

It wasn't until August 1967, just as Morrison's affair with Nico was reaching its nadir, that The Doors returned to LA, and Sunset Sound studio, to begin work again in earnest on *Strange Days*. By then, with both *Light My Fire* and *The Doors* having topped the US charts, the pressure was really on for them to come up with another hit. Yet Elektra and producer Paul Rothchild did their best to shield the band from outside interference.

> **"Morrison knew that I disapproved of his self-destruction. More than anyone else in the band."**
> **John Densmore**

"Despite the pressure, I would say that was our most fun recording," says Densmore now. "First of all, we had written both albums before we even went in the studio – 30 or 40 songs. But the first album, we were a little intimidated by the studio. It wasn't our turf. We had to learn how to make records. And I would say by the second album we were more relaxed and we started using the studio as the fifth Door. I think we had an early copy of *Sgt. Pepper* and we were really turned on to experimenting with the studio and doing backward piano tracks and having a lot of fun."

Some tracks came easier than others. *My Eyes Have Seen You* dated back to the original demo that had won them their deal with Elektra the year before, but made more frantic with this telling, sounding more like the Stones, with barrelhouse piano and Tequila Sunset-drenched guitars. The title track came with a suitably disconnected lead vocal, fear and mystery and the chase to catch the new dawn. *Moonlight Drive*, the very first thing Morrison had ever sung for Manzarek, but never properly captured on tape well enough to make the first album, now came alive in the new studio, helped not a little by a new Moog synthesiser and a far-out new solo from Krieger.

Nevertheless, even Jim Morrison couldn't ignore the clamour for more success, from both the record company and from inside his own head. As always, alcohol was his preferred stress-buster and now he began to hit the bottle in earnest. All the while they continued gigging, too, adding to the pressure, allowing them no rest, fitting in weekend gigs between late-night sessions in the studio. After one spectacularly bad show opening for Simon & Garfunkel in Queen's, in August 1967, Morrison got so wasted in an Irish bar he didn't bother to go home – he just stayed on drinking right through the next day too. Another time he ended up on someone's couch where he began reciting a new poem he'd been working on for months called *Celebration Of The Lizard*…

Poet Michael McClure, whose latest play *The Beard* Morrison was a fan of, visited during these sessions. Installed in the latest eight-track facility at Sunset Sound, Rothchild would turn the lights down low, burn incense and light candles, and allow the band to smoke weed and drink freely – anything to capture the right mood for each song. The only thing they actually stopped short of was dropping acid while they worked.

"No, no, no, no, no!" says Manzarek, aghast at the very idea. "LSD was a sacred sacrament that was to be taken on the beach at Venice, under the warmth of the sun, with our father the sun and our mother the ocean close by, and you realised how divine you were. It wasn't a drug for entertainment. You could smoke a joint and play your music, as most musicians did at the time. But as far as taking LSD, that had to be done in a natural setting. It was for opening the doors of perception. Perceiving why we're alive on this planet, where we've come from, where we're going. Answering those basic human questions that all people have asked themselves. Then bringing that information back and getting into your rehearsal studio, getting into the recording studio, creating your music, creating your songs, creating your words. That's where all of that came out. You didn't do it on LSD. LSD was your foundation. Psychedelics were your foundation on which to build.

"Each song has its own sound," Manzarek continues. "The first album was 'The Doors Live At The Whisky A Go Go'. That's essentially what it is. The aural spectrum is the same. But on *Strange Days,* The Doors begin to show their versatility. That's what it's all about. My god, I played an entire song backwards! I wrote out the chord changes for *Unhappy Girl*, then started at the bottom right-hand side of the page and moved to the left and up the page… and I'm thinking, 'Oh god, let me be on the beat.' When I'd finished, I went back into the studio to a round of applause. It was a great sound but it was insane. It was totally insane! It was youth having no idea of its limitations…"

The Doors: the men in black.

GLOBE PHOTOS/ZUMAPRESS.COM/ALAMY LIVE NEWS

And very little idea of its responsibilities either – certainly as far as Jim Morrison was concerned. When it came time to record the album's pivotal track, the 10-minute eco-anthem, *When The Music's Over,* Morrison absolutely insisted the whole track be sung and played live in the studio, rather than broken down into its constituent parts. Live, *When The Music's Over* now rivalled *The End* from the first album as the band's most climactic moment. First aired publicly during a stint at the Matrix club in San Francisco back in March, Morrison would break the piece up with two different poems, *Who Scared You* and *Everything Will Be Reported (At Night Your Dreams Will Be Recorded).* But in the studio, it all depended on the moment. No matter how great the new eight-track equipment was, Morrison wanted this one kept raw and alive.

The band acquiesced, then sat there for more than 12 hours waiting for him to show up. He never did. Instead, he phoned the studio at 3am and spoke to Krieger. "We're in trouble here," he told the guitarist. He and Pam Courson were tripping on strong acid and wanted Krieger to drive them to nearby Griffith Park where they could "cool out". Krieger wearily agreed. When he dropped them off at Courson's again at daylight, he reminded Morrison he was due back in the studio at noon. Once again, however, Morrison didn't show up. They sent out people to find him but no go. The band eventually hung on until nearly three o'clock the following morning when they decided they could wait no longer. They recorded the music with Manzarek singing lead.

When Morrison finally showed – at noon the following day, 48 wasted hours after he was supposed to, John Densmore had it out with him. Densmore, who was the hardest of the three surviving Doors to pin down for this interview, was also the band member most likely to question Morrison's quasi-philosophical standpoint during his lifetime, becoming ever more frustrated at the increasingly over-indulgent antics of the only guy in the band who couldn't actually play an instrument.

> **"Morrison had gone too far. Into a land where no so-called rock star had gone before."**
> **Ray Manzarek**

It was never Morrison's art that Densmore wanted to rein in, simply his self-destructive behaviour. "Musically, I wanted it to go out further on the edge!" he says. "I was a jazz buff before The Doors. I even was a snob about rock. I mean, I knew about Elvis and Little Richard, loved it. But I came from a sort of improvisational, experimental background, so I loved exploring the edge." Densmore just didn't want to waste time. "Morrison knew I disapproved of his self-destruction, that's for sure. More than anyone else in the band." He denies that they ever had an out-and-out fight, though. "But he could feel my vibe." Gentle chuckle. "You know?"

Rothchild eventually broke the tension by suggesting they simply get to work. Morrison began whining about having to overdub a vocal that was always a product of his imagination at any given moment. But the track was recorded and Manzarek insisted he would simply cue him in. To everyone's astonishment and no little relief, a riled-up yet secretly repentant Morrison nailed what would become the album's finest moment on the second take.

It was Krieger's turn to need some extra help, however, when it came to recording his solo for *You're Lost Little Girl,* the first song the guitarist ever wrote, and one which pre-dated his time in The Doors. Much as he agonised over it, he simply could not get it down. Again, Paul Rothchild provided the remedy when he turned Krieger on to some super-strength black hash, imported from London, then threw everybody else out of the studio and recorded Krieger playing in the dark. When the producer then suggested getting a hooker in to give Morrison a blowjob while he did the vocal, things did not go so well, though. "We went with a later take," Densmore concludes diplomatically.

A few nights later, Jefferson Airplane singer Grace Slick showed up while the band were recording *Horse Latitudes,* Morrison's 16-line poem set to Manzarek's musique concrète-style keyboard vortex. Recording yet again in pitch darkness, save for the candles, incense and the glowing ends of several joints, and amid an entourage of whooping and screaming freaks and followers, Slick went back to San Francisco saying The Doors had scared the living daylights out of her.

On September 2, The Doors played with a black leather-clad Morrison in Asbury Park, New Jersey, where an 18-year-old Bruce Springsteen was in the audience. When they performed *When The Music's Over* at the Village Theater in Manhattan the following

CBS VIA GETTY IMAGES

The future is orange: The Doors on The Jonathan Winters Show in 1967.

night, Albert Goldman again wrote of it as "an incredible moment". Morrison was already working on new material that would not see the light of day until the following year, like *The Unknown Soldier* and *Five To One*, while the band and Elektra did what they could to keep him focused enough to finish the second album first.

With work on *Strange Days* all but completed, on September 17 The Doors made their fateful appearance performing *Light My Fire* live on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. Before the show, Morrison promised Sullivan that he would not sing the line, *'Girl, we couldn't much higher.'* When Morrison broke his promise, Sullivan reacted angrily, informing the singer that The Doors would never do the show again, to which Morrison sardonically replied, "Hey man, we just did *The Ed Sullivan Show*."

With advance orders topping half a million, Elektra rush-released the first single, the delightful *People Are Strange*, and watched as it skimmed the US Top 10, then vanished without trace. *Light My Fire*, meanwhile, was still nailed on to the charts more than six months after its release, even returning to No.1 early the following year with the release of Puerto Rican singer José Feliciano's acoustic cover version.

The Doors, though, were never seen by their fans, or even their record company, as a singles-reliant act. Unlike The Beatles and the Stones, who'd begun that way then evolved into album-oriented acts, The Doors were always about the albums, recording epic rock suites double-digit minutes long before Zeppelin, Floyd or even Hendrix had given it a shot. The Doors may or may not have been the beginning of rock-as-art, but they were certainly the most successful end product of that idea.

And it was something they brought to bear on all their live performances too. "As Jim once said, 'We perform a musical séance' – not to raise the dead, but to palliate the dead, to ease the pain and the suffering of the dead and the living," explains Manzarek. "And in doing that, we dove into areas that were deeply, deeply Freudian, and psychologically deeply Jungian at the same time. So we were a merging of both Freud and Jung, which might seem impossible but it happened onstage, and it upset the establishment. There was just something about the power in the music, and that insane sexuality of Jim Morrison that drove the establishment right over the edge."

Determined to ram home the fact that The Doors stood for more than just mere pop stardom, at Morrison's insistence the band then put its foot down and vetoed the album cover originally suggested for *Strange Days* – another group shot, similar to the one that adorned *The Doors*.

"I hated the cover of our first album," Morrison explained to *The LA Free Press*. For the new album, he claimed that he'd told Elektra: "Put a chick on it. Let's have a dandelion…"

What he actually told the label was that he wanted the band in a room surrounded by a pack of dogs. When their art director Bill Harvey asked him why, he shrugged: "Because dog is god spelled backwards."

Trying to keep a straight face, a compromise was finally reached with the now-famous scene of half a dozen carnival freaks, comprising a midget, a juggler, two acrobats, a trumpet-player and a strongman. On the reverse, there was the extraordinary sight of 'surreal' fashion icon Zazel Wild, wearing a flowing kaftan, regarding a midget coolly from her doorway at Sniffen Court, off East 38th Street in New York, where the pictures were taken. Elektra thought the shots too weird even for The Doors but Morrison loved them. The only sign that this was the new album from The Doors came with the glancing shot of a Doors poster, placed at a slant on the back of the sleeve, with the strap *Strange Days* slapped across the foot. Other than that, you either knew what you were looking at, or you were from the wrong planet.

When the album was released at the end of September 1967, it was raved over rapturously by a rock media already primed to receive anything their new favourite group did next. Their audience, however, remained unsure. With no comparable anthem to *Light My Fire* to rally the freak flag around, the album tiptoed rather than raced to near the top of the US charts, eventually stopping off at No.3. It would soon be superseded in the public's imagination by the next album, 1968's *Waiting For The Sun*, and that record's breakout single, *Hello, I Love You*.

In the UK, where the first Doors album had been a minor commercial hit but a major critical success, *Strange Days* came and went in a flash, without getting anywhere near the charts. Again, it was only *Waiting For The Sun* that finally introduced The Doors to the UK Top 20, by which time no one could recall anything about *Strange Days* other than its, well, strange cover.

As if to live up to their somewhat neglected new album's title, The Doors spent the final weeks of 1967 imprisoned on the road, living out a dream that was already turning into a nightmare . Their tour schedule had grown so out of control that they were often playing auditoriums on the West Coast one night, only to be sent flying across country back to New York to play some club – a hangover from their days before they'd hit it big which their inexperienced management had not had the foresight to renegotiate – leaving all four band members exhausted, disoriented, flat and, in Morrison's case, all too often simply unconscious. When John Densmore's new girlfriend, Julia Brose, asked to be introduced to Morrison, the drummer merely pointed at a figure curled up under a bench at the airport, where he was sleeping off his latest drunken, hell-for-leather binge. Two trashcans had been strategically placed in front of him to discourage the multitude of teenage fans that now routinely followed the band everywhere. "There he is," Densmore told her with barely concealed loathing. "That's our famous lead singer."

On December 9, 1967, the day after his 24th birthday, Jim Morrison drove with the rest of The Doors to a show in New Haven, at the local hockey rink. Just before the start of the show, Morrison was cautioned by a police officer for taking a young girl fan into a shower stall with him, where they had been making out. When Morrison told the cop to "go fuck yourself", the cop grabbed his can of Chemical Mace and sprayed it straight into Morrison's face. Morrison fled, screaming and gasping. Onstage later that night, still furious, he launched into the whole story before the packed arena. When the band then launched into *When The Music's Over*, Morrison screamed, "We want the whole fucking world and we want it now!"

> **"I used to joke that it was downhill after Light My Fire, but Strange Days was us at our best."**
> **Robby Krieger**

The crowd surged forward and the cops, fearing a riot, panicked and ran onstage and arrested the singer there and then. They then dragged him, punching and kicking, to a squad car. "That was horrible," says Krieger. "We didn't know what the hell was gonna happen. They beat the hell out of him on the way to the car too."

Morrison became the first singer ever to be arrested by police during an actual concert performance, charged with inciting a riot, indecency and public obscenity. Three writers and photographers from *Life* magazine who tried to intervene were also arrested. Although all charges were later dropped, the next morning it was national news across America. Thus was born Jim Morrison, rock star martyr, a role he would continue to play right up to and beyond the grave.

One of the final Doors shows of 1967, however, ended on a more surreal note. Having pre-recorded blistering performances of *Light My Fire* and *Moonlight Drive* for TV's *The Jonathan Winters Show*, The Doors interrupted their second of three shows at the Winterland Ballroom in San Francisco, on December 28, in order to wheel a TV set onstage, so they could watch themselves perform. They had been halfway through *Back Door Man* when Winters' show started. They simply stopped playing, downing tools, as it were, and walked over to the side of the stage the set was on and gazed at themselves on TV.

"Yeah, we had the audience watching us, while we watched us – onstage and on TV," laughs Manzarek. When it was finished, Manzarek simply walked over and switched the TV off, went back to his keyboard and counted them all in again.

Looking back now, all three surviving Doors agree that *Strange Days* was a watershed moment in the band's story. And also that it was, arguably, their finest, purest moment.

"Well, I'm surprised, because very few people realise that," says Krieger. "But I think you're right. I think it is one of our best albums. And we thought so too at the time. We loved it. You know, we took our time making it and really, really liked how it came out. The record company did too. Jac Holzman played it for Paul Simon. And Paul Simon, after listening to the record, said: 'The Doors are the best band in the United States.' *Strange Days* was really the four of us working together kind of on the same path. After that, things got kind of…"

He trails off and I remind him of the famous quote from Paul Rothchild about never knowing which Jim Morrison was going to turn up in the studio: the forward-thinking poet determined to create great art, or the monstrous drunk whose ego was so out of control he viewed the rest of the band almost as an appendage. That, though, says Krieger, was a phenomenon that only truly began on their next album, *Waiting For The Sun*.

"In the *Strange Days* period, Jim was more interested in psychedelics than, you know, getting wasted. I mean, he still might not show up if he was on too much acid but he was still just one part of this bigger… thing. I always used to joke and say after *Light My Fire*, it was all downhill from there. But it kind of was. Except for *Strange Days*. That was probably us at our best, when it was still fun."

Listening to the album now, it's easy to see what the drummer means. The band, using the studio for the first time as almost a fifth instrument, have a wonderfully light touch, even as they shift gears through some of the most poignant material of their catalogue: the swirly, candy-coloured organ on the title track; the joyful interplay between Krieger's spidery guitar on *Love Me Two Times*; Densmore's feathery percussion on *Moonlight Drive*; the sheer youthful exuberance of tracks like *Love Me Two Times* and *My Eyes Have Seen You*. Morrison's young voice still contains its honeyed purr, even as he's declaiming loudly on *Horse Latitudes*, or flailing wildly on *When The Music's Over*.

The treacly way he softly delivers the deliriously wistful *I Can't See Your Face In My Mind* is a far cry from the growling, out-of-control drunk of the final Doors album, *LA Woman*, which still casts its own tawdry spell but evokes none of the beauty of the voice on *Strange Days*. Here, you can hear the birth of The Lizard King – but also the death of Jim Morrison.

The final word goes to to Ray Manzarek, the first to grasp Morrison's potential that hot afternoon on Venice Beach. "That line in *When The Music's Over* that Morrison sings: *'Cancel my subscription to the resurrection/Send my credentials to the house of detention'* – I think that was almost his way of saying, 'Okay, I already see what this whole fame trip is about, and I won't let you make me play by those rules.'"

Manzarek, who has a tendency to speak in italics whenever the subject of his late friend comes up, then goes into overdrive.

"I mean, my god, Jim Morrison should have been up there running for political office. Jim Morrison is the son of the admiral. He is the well-born young man, white Anglo Saxon protestant, who is heir to the throne. He should have been a well-behaved young Republican, except he's not, he's in The Doors and he's totally misbehaving. And proof of that is the captain – Captain Kelly, the classic Irish cop, who arrested him onstage in New Haven – he said to Jim: 'You've gone too far, young man!' And I thought, it's perfect. He has broken no law, other than the law of civil restraint – and he had gone too far. Into a land where no so-called rock star had gone before."

FLY ON THE WALL

Sorting myth from fact

Jimi Hendrix jams with Jim Morrison

When the guitar icon met The Doors singer in a small New York club, the on-stage jamming soon turned into a full-on, bottle-breaking brawl – thanks to Janis Joplin.

Words: **Johnny Black**

The late 60s was the dawn of the era of the superstar collaboration. But for every Blind Faith or Crosby, Stills & Nash there were a dozen drunken on-stage jams featuring rock'n'roll's biggest stars that have slipped down the back of the sofa of history.

One of the most infamous was the fleeting union between Jimi Hendrix and Jim Morrison on stage at hip New York club Steve Paul's The Scene in the spring of 1968, while Janis Joplin looked on. Peace and love wasn't on the agenda when what should have been a supreme meeting of minds disintegrated into a chaotic brawl that ended with Joplin smashing a bottle on Morrison's head.

Wild child: a "lewd and crude" Morrison was at the heart of the fight.

Lester Chambers (vocalist, The Chambers Brothers): We were the house band at the Cheetah club, just a few blocks away on Broadway. When we finished at the Cheetah we would walk over to the Steve Paul Scene. You would come in off the street, go down four or five steps and you were in the club. It was a small space, maybe a hundred people at the most, so you got to mingle with whoever was there: John Lennon, Johnny Winter, Buddy Miles; if Janis Joplin was in town she'd be there; Al Kooper of the Blues Project was down there a lot.

Al Kooper (guitarist/organist the Blues Project): When the late shows finished, the waitresses would begin their clean-ups, and the participants of that night's jams would gather in the dressing rooms. The unknowing, paying customers would settle their bills and set out for the suburbs, and then the action would begin. We'd slowly come out, like bats in the night, and take over the stage.

> **"Janis stepped in and hit Jim over the head with the bottle – then she poured her drink all over him."**
>
> **Danny Fields**

Lester Chambers: You could only get about six people comfortably on that stage. If it got too crowded, sometimes musicians would take up a little area in front of the stage or at the side.

Al Kooper: Hendrix loved this. He would show up more often than not, always with his guitar and his trusty Nagra [reel-to-reel tape recorder] in tow. He would fastidiously set up the Nagra next to him and record every jam he participated in.

Danny Fields (publicist, Elektra Records): I was working for Elektra, which meant I was working for Jim Morrison, but he and I didn't get along. In my professional capacity I kept an eye on where Jim was, because wherever he was there would be trouble. I knew he was at The Scene that night, and Jimi was always there. And I was a teenage boy who worshipped Janis, so I knew she was there as well.

Sam Andrew (guitarist, Big Brother And The Holding Company): We spent many nights at The Scene, whenever we were playing in New York. They were just jamming that night on tunes that everyone knew in common, especially blues. I almost never sit in on things like that because it's really hard to get the right sound if you're going through an unfamiliar amp and everything.

Lester Chambers: The band that night, as I remember it, included Randy Hobbs, Bobby Peterson and Randy Zehringer, all from The McCoys. I can't remember anybody else on guitar, but usually when Jimi went up to play guitar nobody else did.

Michael J Weber (audience member): When Morrison showed up he was very intoxicated, God knows on what, and he was slurring, very stoned. Jim was an ornery character when he wanted to be. He was very in-your-face. But everybody was at that time. Jimi was very different from Morrison. He had a lovely vibe about him. He was very shy and reserved. He was the same soft-spoken guy when he talked to women. Morrison was very abrupt, he said whatever he wanted to say.

Sam Andrew: Jim swaggered over to where Janis and me were sitting and, without any provocation at all, he just yanked her hair down to the floor. She was already very jaundiced about him, so then she hit him with a bottle of Southern Comfort, broke it. It was almost like a Vaudeville act.

Danny Fields: Janis's hatred of Morrison, I don't know where it started. But if you mentioned

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Scene stealer: Hendrix was a regular at jam sessions at New York club Steve Paul's The Scene.

CHEETAH
THE GREMMIES AND THE LAST M
CHEETAH

Cool cats: punters outside the Cheetah club hotspot in 1966.

Jim's name she would say: "That asshole." She was not going to put up with what she thought was his childish, disgusting, rude behaviour, wherever she encountered it. It riled her. She was past giving him a chance.

Lester Chambers: When Morrison got onto the stage, his voice was heard. He made a couple of "Oh-wow-wooooh" kind of noises. He was so drunk he had to hold on to the mic stand, and every once in a while, he'd go: "Oooooooh! Waughhhhhh! Awoweee!" At one point, Jimi said: "Ladies and gentlemen, you have heard the sound of Jim Morrison."

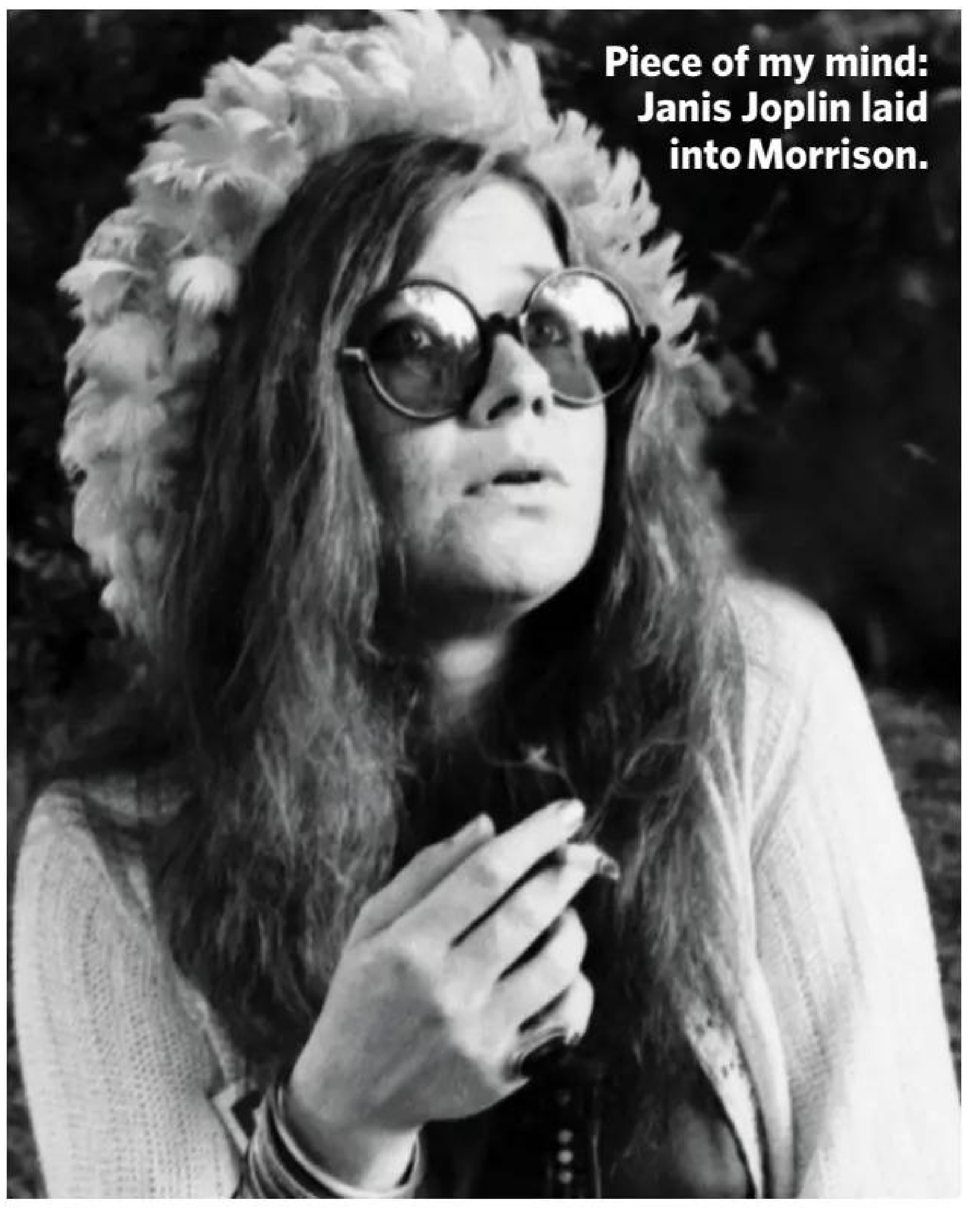
Rick Derringer (guitarist, The McCoys): Jimi recorded the whole scene between him and Jim Morrison. Jimi was playing and he was recording himself that night in a jamming situation. He had one of his hats on that he used to wear, that little cowboy hat kind of thing.

Michael J Weber: Jimi was already playing when Morrison got down on his knees and started giving Jimi like this mock blow job. He was being very lewd and crude.

Danny Fields: So Morrison has his arms wrapped round Jimi's legs and he's still screaming: "I wanna suck your cock!" He was very loud. And Hendrix was still attempting to play. Morrison wouldn't let go. It was a tasteless exhibition of scene-stealing – something Morrison was really into. To top it all off, Janis, who had been sitting in the back of the room, saw this happening and suddenly appeared at the edge of the stage with a bottle in one hand and her drink in the other.

Sam Andrew: I didn't actually see Morrison kneeling down in from of Jimi, but Janis had this real righteous sense of when someone was taking advantage of someone else, or trying to steal the show, which Morrison was. She would become like a schoolteacher all of a sudden, and felt she had to step in to teach someone how to behave.

Danny Fields: Janis stepped in and hit Jim over the head with the bottle, then she poured her drink over him. The three of them started grabbing and rolling all over the floor in a writhing heap of hysteria. I swear there was, like, fur flying, like a cloud of dust around them, as if they were in a dry river bed. They were in a tangle of broken glass, dust and guitars. A lot of dust and feathers and leathers and satins went flying around.



Piece of my mind: Janis Joplin laid into Morrison.

Sam Andrew: I think Janis was just trying to tell him to stop being an ass. If he'd got up and sang a song, that'd have been fine, but we were there to listen to Jimi and he was stopping us from enjoying it.

Danny Fields: Naturally it ended up in all three of them being carried out. Morrison was the most seriously hurt. They all had minders and roadies, and there were guys from the club whose job was to help keep order. Janis's guys went straight in there to help her, no questions asked, just get them apart, get them out of there and back to the hotel. Jimi was part of the family at The Scene, so the club guys would wade in to help him, and Morrison had been sending off danger signals from the moment he got there. He was behaving like someone from the sewers.

Lester Chambers: I don't remember the fight between Jimi and Jim. I heard they had an argument, but the club was real small and very hot. It didn't have any air-conditioning, so you would step outside to get some air and cool down.

Lester Chambers: It didn't stop the music. After Jim and Janis were gone we just kept on playing.

Danny Fields: After The Scene closed at four am, people would move on to Steve's funny little house in Chelsea. People would sit around and listen to albums and then, eventually, everybody would disperse, and there was an all-night coffee house across the street where you'd often find Jimi sitting with a peaceful cup of coffee at five or six am.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

The Scene closed its doors 18 months after the disastrous Hendrix/Morrison/Joplin dust-up, victim of one too many unfriendly visits from local gangsters. The final show, featuring Sha Na Na, turned into a full-scale riot. Rick Derringer of The McCoys went on to bigger things, notching up a string of solo hits in the 70s. On September 18, 1970 Jimi Hendrix died in London after choking on his own vomit. Within 10 months, Janis Joplin and Jim Morrison were also dead. All three were 27 years old.

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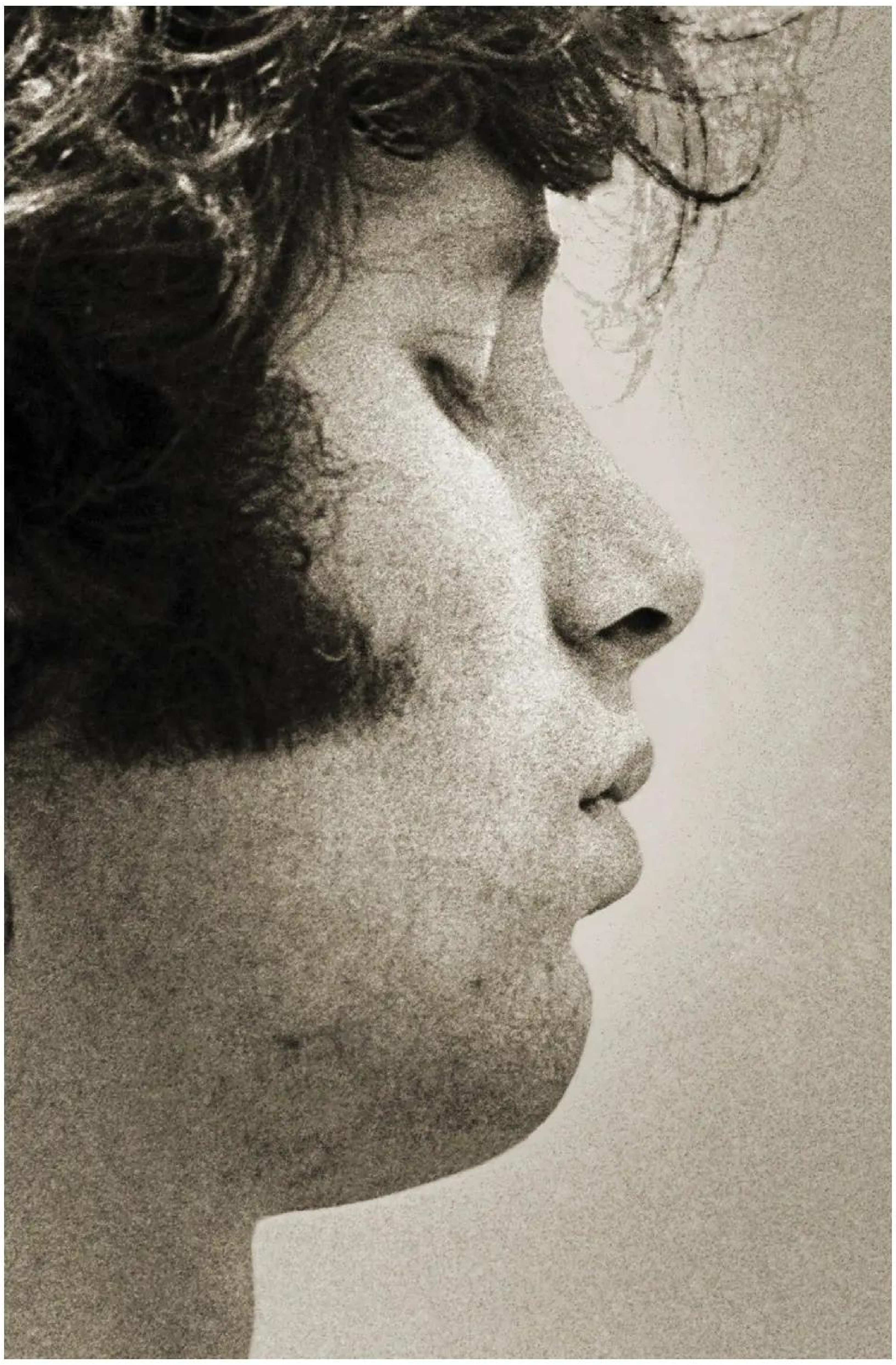
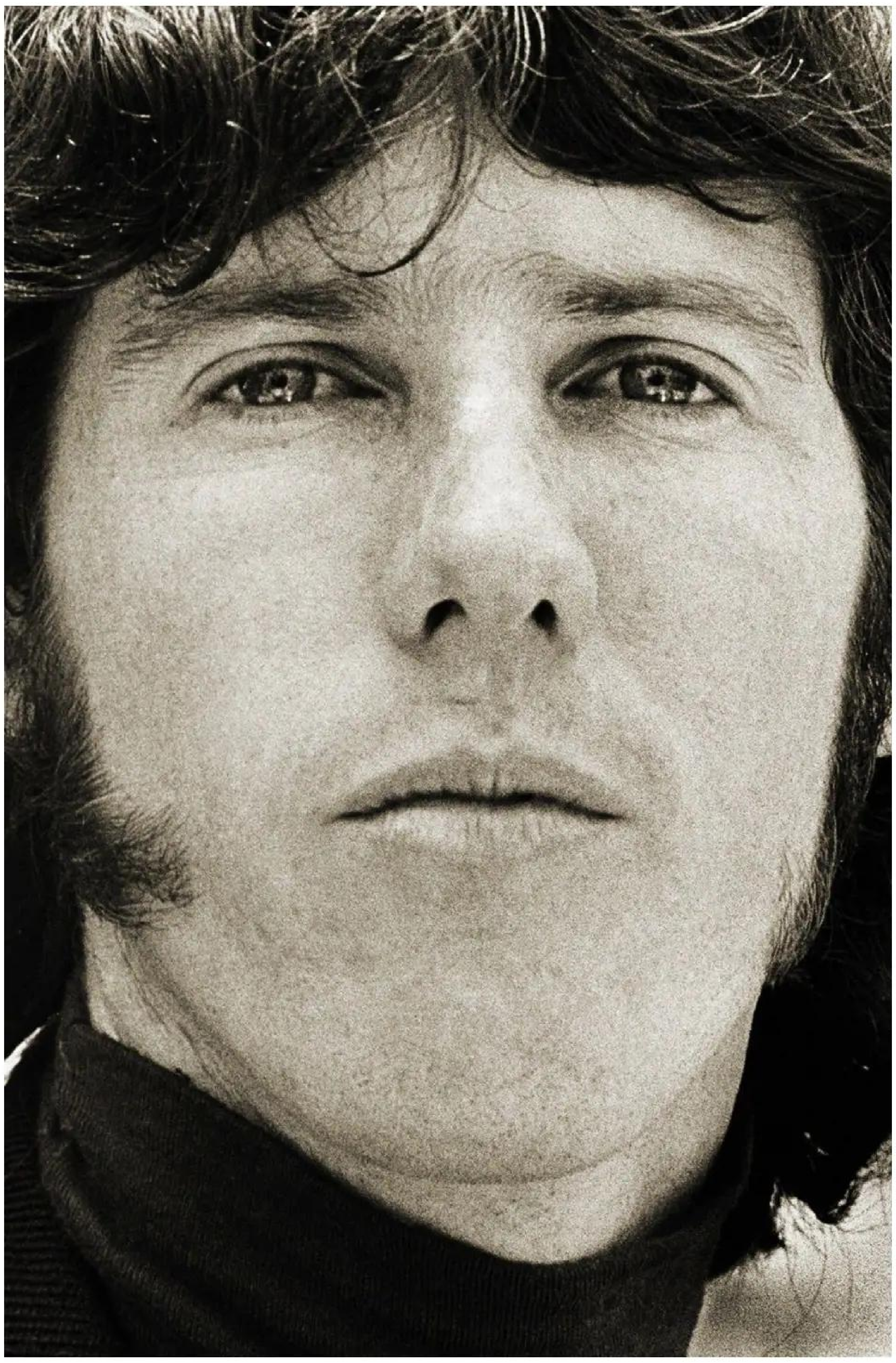




SUMMER'S END

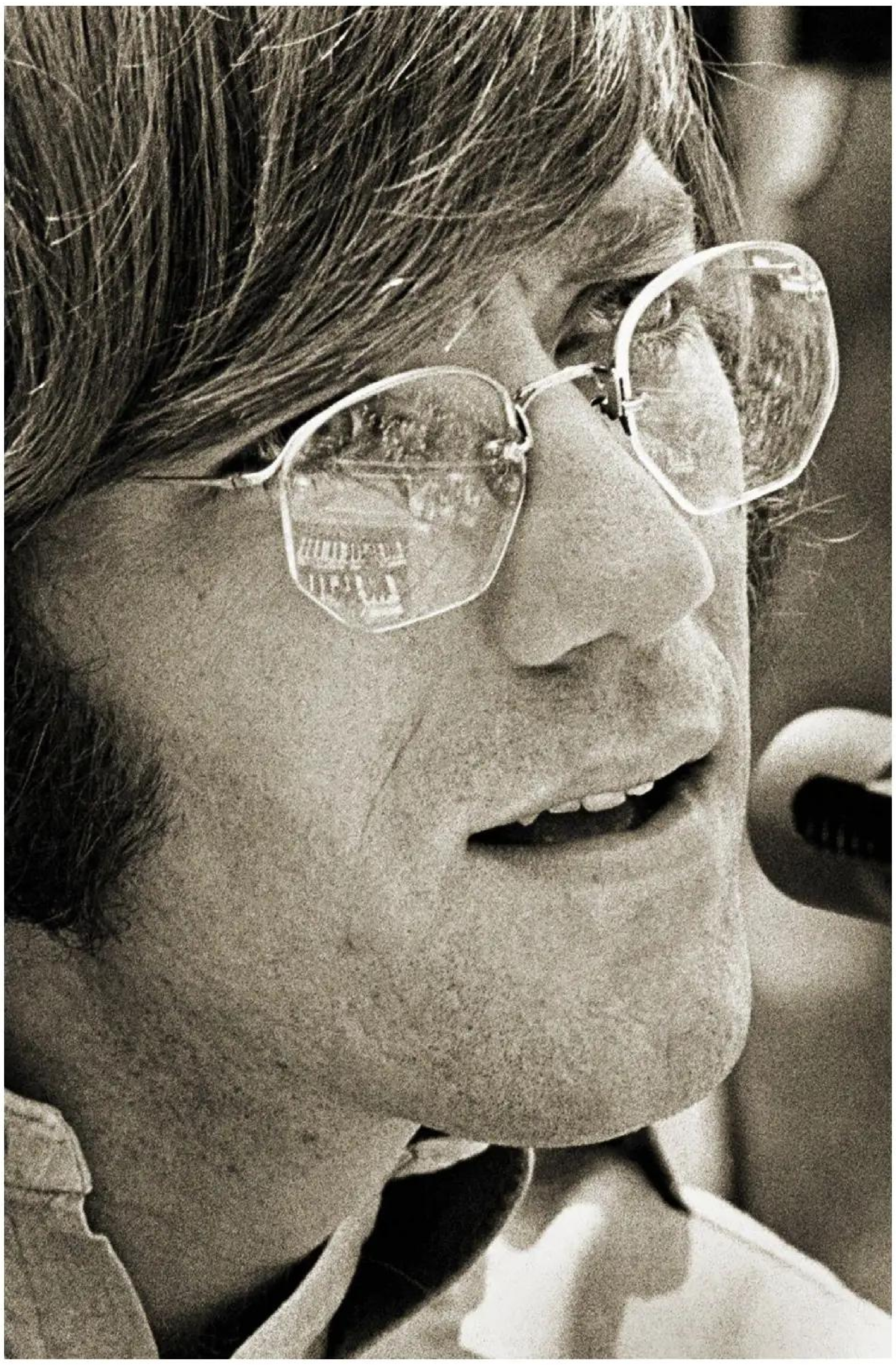
In 1968, The Doors were riding high on the success of their first two albums – but Jim Morrison was already on the path to self-destruction. What emerged was *Waiting For The Sun*, the album where The Doors first started to crack.

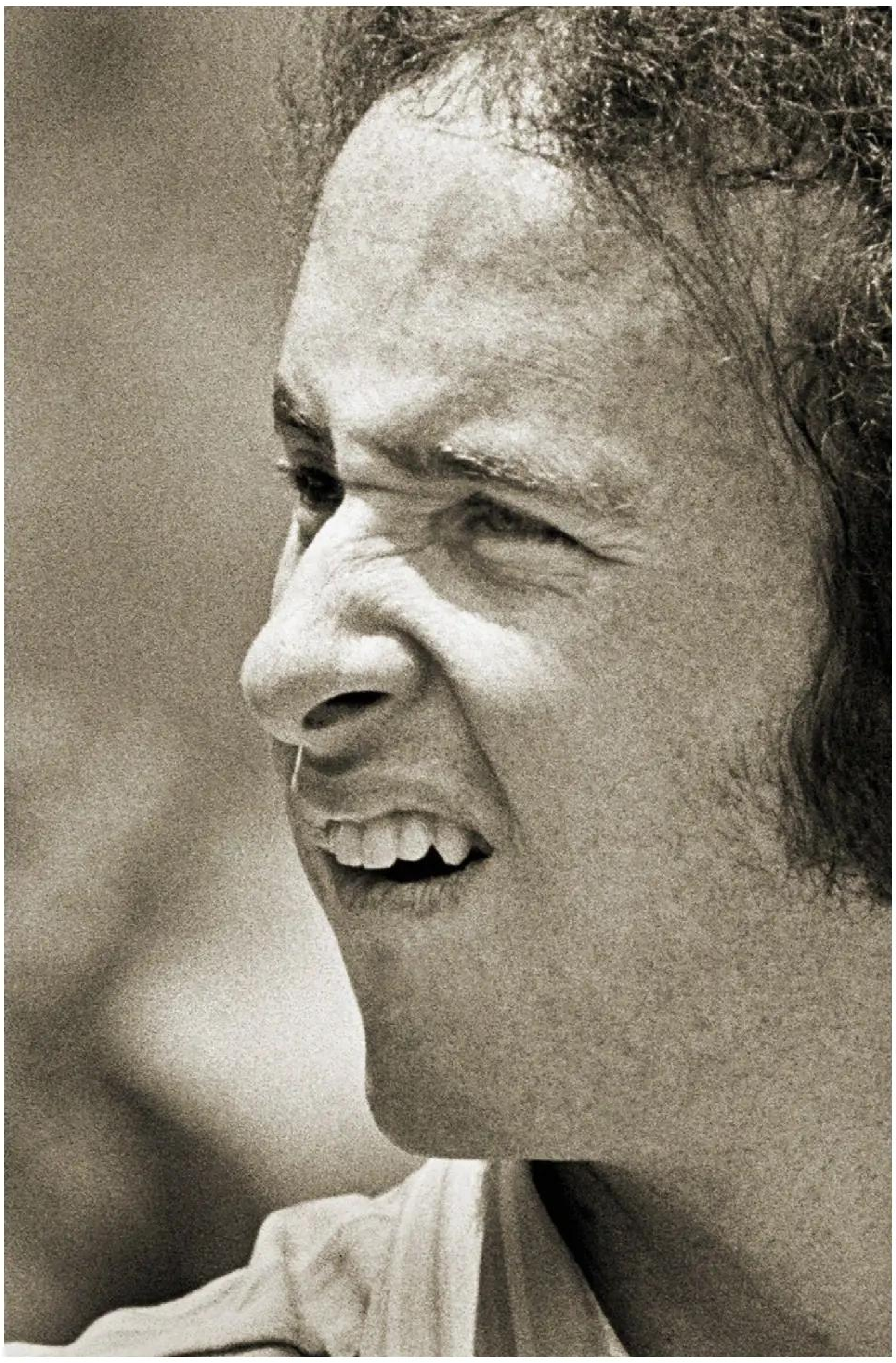
Words: **Rob Hughes**

In Joan Didion's 1979 book *The White Album*, the cultural essayist finds herself at a recording session on Sunset Boulevard in Spring 1968. and she's watching The Doors and producer Paul Rothchild work up a track for their third album, *Waiting For The Sun*. Everything seems as it should be, except for one thing: the lead singer is missing.

At one point, Ray Manzarek looks up from his keyboard: "Do you think Morrison's going to come back?" No one answers. Jim Morrison eventually wanders in, sits on a leather couch and closes his eyes. Nobody even acknowledges his presence. An hour or so passes. Morrison suggests heading out to West Covina later, but his conversation with Manzarek quickly peters out.

At one point, the singer lights a match. "He studied the flame awhile and then very slowly, very deliberately, lowered it to the fly of his black vinyl pants," Didion observes. "Manzarek watched him…There was a sense that no one was going to leave the room, ever. It would be some weeks before The Doors finished recording this album. I did not see it through."





WILLIAM WARREN/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

THE
doors
WAITING FOR THE SUN

Time can be a fluid concept when it comes to recording studios, as many musicians will attest. But Didion's account highlights a specific issue hampering The Doors in 1968: Jim Morrison was becoming increasingly unreliable. Exacerbated by his drinking, he was invariably late for recording sessions. Sometimes he didn't show at all. When he wasn't drunk, he was stoned. Or both.

Yet for all his inconstancy, Morrison was invaluable to The Doors. Here was their focal point and totem, their shamanic superstar. Telling him to leave was never an option. Instead, his bandmates reconclied themselves to working around him. As Richard Goldstein, another studio visitor to those sessions, summed up in an article for *New York*: "The others tolerate him, as a pungent but necessary prop."

In Morrison's defence, there were extenuating circumstances. Rothchild had guided The Doors through their first two albums without too much incident or drama, but his fastidiousness shifted apace on *Waiting For The Sun*. He demanded countless takes of each song, stretching both the band's patience and any notions of spontaneity. In the studio, Morrison was often kept waiting his turn for hours. Self-medication helped nullify the boredom. So too did a regular parade of hangers-on. "Scenes, heavy pill-taking and stuff," Krieger later recalled. "That was rock'n'roll to its fullest."

It all got too much for John Densmore one afternoon. An inebriated Morrison turned up late with three similarly wasted friends, who began messing around in the vocal booth. The drummer told Rothchild he was quitting. Despite the producer's best efforts to convince him otherwise, he threw down his sticks and bailed out.

Densmore returned, somewhat sheepishly, at noon the next day. "I was drawn back because I didn't know any other way to live," he conceded in his 1990 autobiography, *Riders On The Storm*. Upon re-entering the studio, Densmore wrote that he immediately felt "the black Morrison cloud still hanging over the place."

Meanwhile, the success of The Doors' two previous albums meant that they were granted both unlimited studio time and a generous budget for *Waiting For The Sun*. According to Jerry Hopkins' and Danny Sugerman's *No One Here Gets Out Alive* – named after a Morrison lyric from the album – *The Unknown Soldier* took 130 attempts before Rothchild was satisfied. Krieger cited the production process as their single biggest problem. In his memoir, *Set The Night On Fire*, the guitarist's bemoaned Rothchild "spending hours and hours dialling in drum sounds and tweaking everything obsessively in pursuit of a perfection that only he could hear…Recording turned into a chore."

There was also another, more pressing obstacle: lack of songs. *The Doors* and *Strange Days* had drawn from a healthy cache of ready-to-go ideas, mostly rooted in Morrison's notebooks. But the accelerated demands of touring and promotion, allied to a hectic recording schedule, now left the band a little short. This was something that the headstrong Rothchild would later use to justify his exacting studio methods.

"As the talent fades, the producer has to become more active," he reasoned, somewhat contemptuously, to interviewer Blair Jackson in ▷

"If you close your eyes, you can hear the tension. You can hear three cringing bandmates."

Robby Krieger

1981. "It's sort of like the ageing beauty queen. As the beauty fades, more make-up goes on."

Another possible source of Morrison's ebbing enthusiasm for the project was the failure of his epic performance piece, *Celebration Of The Lizard*. Loosely divided into seven sections, it was a connected series of poems that involved spoken verse, allegorical lyrics, leftfield musical passages and sung vocals. The whole thing, previewed at Doors gigs in late '67, clocked in around the 17-minute mark.

Morrison's self-styled "invitation to the dark forces" was designed to occupy the entire second side of *Waiting For The Sun*. But the rest of the band struggled with it in the studio, as did Rothchild. The piece ultimately proved too unwieldy. Furthermore, with the exception of its creator, nobody appeared to have a great deal of faith in it.

"If you're going to release a 17-minute song, you'd better be able to stand behind it," Krieger. later reflected of *Celebration Of The Lizard*. "And we just didn't feel it was strong enough."

Given such context, it's a wonder *Waiting For The Sun* got made at all. Luckily though, The Doors' creative well wasn't completely spent. *Hello, I Love You* had been demo'd in 1965 – pre-Krieger – as part of Rick & The Ravens' attempt to snag a deal with Aura Records. The band had decided against reviving it thus far, but now seemed like an opportune moment, especially after Rothchild suggested it had hit single potential.

Inspired by a girl that Morrison spotted at Venice Beach, the song is among the most straightforward in The Doors' canon. Morrison's tone gradually shifts from glorification to dangerously unhinged, the object of his gaze impervious to his attention. The combination of Krieger's insistent fuzz guitar and Manzarek's surging organ line keeps the tension high, as the singer begins to yelp: *'Her arms are wicked*

A song for Europe: The Doors in Frankfurt in 1968 Right: before a German show.

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES X2

> **"Jim would come in too drunk to sing decently. Sometimes it was a phrase at a time."**
>
> **Robby Krieger**

and her legs are long/When she moves my brain screams out this song.' There is, undoubtedly, more than a passing similarity to Dave Davies' riff from The Kinks' *All Day And All Of The Night*, yet Krieger has always denied ripping it off.

"Nothing could be further from the truth," he reiterated in *Set The Night On Fire*. "We ripped off Cream! The song's feel comes from me telling John to emulate Ginger Baker's rumbling tom-tom pattern from *Sunshine Of Your Love*."

Another tune revisited from the 1965 demo tape was the ephemeral *Summer's Almost Gone*. It remains one of The Doors' most underrated moments, a woozy folk-blues with a balmy seasonal air. The instrumentation feels happily lopsided, as if time's axis has slipped into a fanciful psychedelic daydream. Morrison sings like he's immersed in a vision: *'Morning found us calmly unaware/Noon burned gold into our hair/At night, we swim the laughin' sea.'* Yet, just as the youthful optimism of 1965 was slowly waning by '68, the song carries a bittersweet note. The good times are over. Winter draws near. *'Where will we be when the summer's gone?'* asks the singer.

Celebration Of The Lizard hadn't been completely abandoned either. Previously slated for the fifth section of the aforementioned opus, *Not To Touch The Earth* showcases The Doors' contrasting creative impulses – experimental art-rock and melodious pop. It begins in dissonant, cyclical vein, briefly straightens out into something more conventional, then reverts back to the former. Manzarek crashes in, Krieger lets out a piercing volley of warped notes, Densmore keeps an unyielding rhythm. It feels like a harum-scarum fling around a mad carousel.

Lyrically, Morrison partly invokes *The Golden Bough*, a Victorian-era study of mythology and religion by Scottish anthropologist James Frazer: *'Not to touch the earth/Not to see the sun/Nothing left to do/But run, run, run.'* There follows a flood of vivid imagery, from dead presidents to outlaws, from snakes to ministers' daughters. Finally, in character, Morrison's voice softens into stoned speech, delivering the line that would seal his legend in reptiloid myth: *'I'm the Lizard King/ I can do anything.'*

Elsewhere, Krieger rises to the challenge with *Spanish Caravan*. An elegant flamenco guitar figure serves as an extended intro, while the song's main lick is borrowed from Spanish composer Isaac Albéniz's classical work, *Asturias (Leyenda)*. Morrison's isolated vocal summons images of Andalusia, hidden treasure and galleons lost at sea, before the entire thing ramps up several gears to a racing climax, helped along by the twin basses of guests Leroy Vinnegar and Doug Lubahn, the latter returning from *Strange Days.*

Krieger's other worthy offering is *Yes, The River Knows*. It's a beautifully understated piece, a dream-folk mirage in which his delicate guitar motif is complemented by Manzarek's soft piano melody. Writing in the liner notes of The Doors' 1997 boxset, Manzarek found parallels in the jazz world: "The piano and guitar interplay is absolutely beautiful. I don't think Robby and I ever played so sensitively together. It was the closest we ever came to being Bill Evans and Jim Hall." Morrison is in relatively tranquil mode too, lost in watery metaphor, drowning in mystic heated wine.

Morrison's sensitive side is further echoed in *Love Street*, a baroque-pop ballad written for girlfriend Pamela Courson. Named after the couple's modest two-storey house in the Hollywood Hills, just behind the Laurel Canyon Country Store, the song opens a window onto what sounds like an idyllic existence: *'There's this store where the creatures meet/I wonder what they do in there?/Summer Sunday and a year.'* It's an imperious, measured vocal, though Morrison's lyrics suggest that beatitude is merely a fleeting state. *'I guess I like it fine, so far,'* he sings, as if overly wary of commitment. ▷

The Doors are open: at the Roundhouse in London in September 1968.

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES X2

By contrast, *The Unknown Soldier* represents something more unsettling. Morrison had visited Arlington Cemetery's Tomb Of The Unknown Soldier prior to The Doors' gig in Washington DC the previous year. Moved to write the song shortly after, it became an anti-war polemic that chimed with escalating American involvement in Vietnam. Morrison calls out U.S. media complicity too: *'Breakfast where the news is read/Television, children fed/Unborn living, living dead/Bullet strikes the helmet's head.'*

Musically, it's The Doors at their most impactful. *The Unknown Soldier* begins with a restrained vocal over queasy organ, quickens into churning pop, then makes way for an army drill, military drum roll and rifle shots. Morrison and the band return in animatedly dramatic form, the singer's anguished howl heightened by crowd noise and funereal bells. It's a signal moment in the band's recorded catalogue, even if 130 takes might've been pushing it a little.

Krieger likened Rothchild's approach to *The Unknown Soldier* to "a science project." By then, the producer was deep into the practice of "heavy vocal compositing", piecing Doors songs together from various different takes "because Jim would come in too drunk to sing decently…I don't mean a verse at a time, either. Sometimes it was a phrase at a time, from one breath phrase to another."

No one knows for sure how many takes were required to put together the closing track, *Five To One*, but it began spontaneously on the studio floor. A thoroughly smashed Morrison urged Densmore to lay down a primitive rhythm – "the dumbest 4/4 beat I knew," deadpanned the drummer – and started in: *'Five to one/One in five/No one here gets out alive.'*

The song unfurls like an ominous processional anthem. Hitched to a distorted guitar line and Kerry Magness' slow-thud bass, the intro prefigures the sick throb of Talking Heads' *Psycho Killer* almost a decade later. Krieger leans into a squealing solo, later appropriated by Pearl Jam via Kiss, and sampled by Kanye West and Jay-Z. The guitarist would call *Five To One* "one of the predecessors to heavy metal."

Morrison's vocal is fabulously demented as he addresses the growing generational rift in America. By 1969, he reckoned, there would be five times as many people under the age of 21 as there would be over it. *'You ballroom days are over, baby,'* he sneers, the taste of revolution and brandy on his lips. He then alludes to Sabine Baring-Gould's 19th century hymnal *Now The Day Is Over* in anticipation of a fresh new dawn.

Coaxing a usable performance from Morrison for the song was Krieger's worst experience on the album. "If you close your eyes and listen closely, you can hear the tension," he wrote. "You can hear an exasperated producer and three cringing bandmates." From this distance at least, the finished result was worth the pain.

On release in July 1968, *Waiting For The Sun* received mixed reviews. Detractors tended to dismiss the album as overly mellow in places, or else too piecemeal. *Rolling Stone* bemoaned what it saw as lack of musical growth. Supporters praised its breadth of styles and experimental daring. Judged next to its predecessors, the *Los Angeles Times* concluded that The Doors "have traded terror for beauty and the success of the swap is a tribute to their talent and originality."

The public was less ambiguous. *Waiting For The Sun* became The Doors' first – and only – chart-topping album in the States. It also broke on through across the Atlantic, placing the band in the UK Top 20 for the first time. Sales were no

"It gave Jim an excuse not to change his behaviour, and it gave the rest of us an excuse to ignore it."

Robby Krieger

The Doors in 1968: sooner or later, something had to give – and it did.

doubt boosted by *Hello, I Love You* shooting to No.1 on Billboard's singles chart, repeating the success of *Light My Fire* a year earlier. Fittingly too, it coincided with Jose Feliciano's Latino-styled cover of *Light My Fire* entering the top five. Whichever way you looked at it, there was no escaping The Doors.

The band began playing larger and larger venues, nightly commanding upwards of $35,000 (well in excess of $300,000 in today's money). They sold out the Hollywood Bowl, co-headlined New York's Flushing Meadows Park with The Who, then set off for an inaugural 17-date tour of Europe in September.

"Look out, England! Jim Morrison is coming to get you!" piped the *Melody Maker*, playing up the singer's reputation and citing his arrest for causing a riot in Connecticut. The band duly made their UK debut at London's Roundhouse, shadowed by a Granada TV crew for the documentary, *The Doors Are Open*. Sharing a bill with Jefferson Airplane over two nights, The Doors sold all 10,000 tickets within hours.

The shows were triumphant. However, The Doors' new level of fame – both in terms of record sales and bigger audiences – brought with it a worrying conundrum. If this is what success tasted like, then Morrison's erratic behaviour was surely a legitimate part of it. No one appeared overly concerned, for instance, when the frontman collapsed on stage during a gig in Amsterdam that September, the result of a drugs blowout that required a hospital dash. He was back the next morning.

Such self-destructive tendencies may not have been actively encouraged, but they became normalised. "It gave Jim an excuse not to change his behaviour, and it gave the rest of us an excuse to ignore it," admitted Krieger.

A month on, The Doors were back in L.A. to start rehearsals for their next album. Sooner or later, something had to give.

ONCE UPON A TIME IN HOLLYWOOD

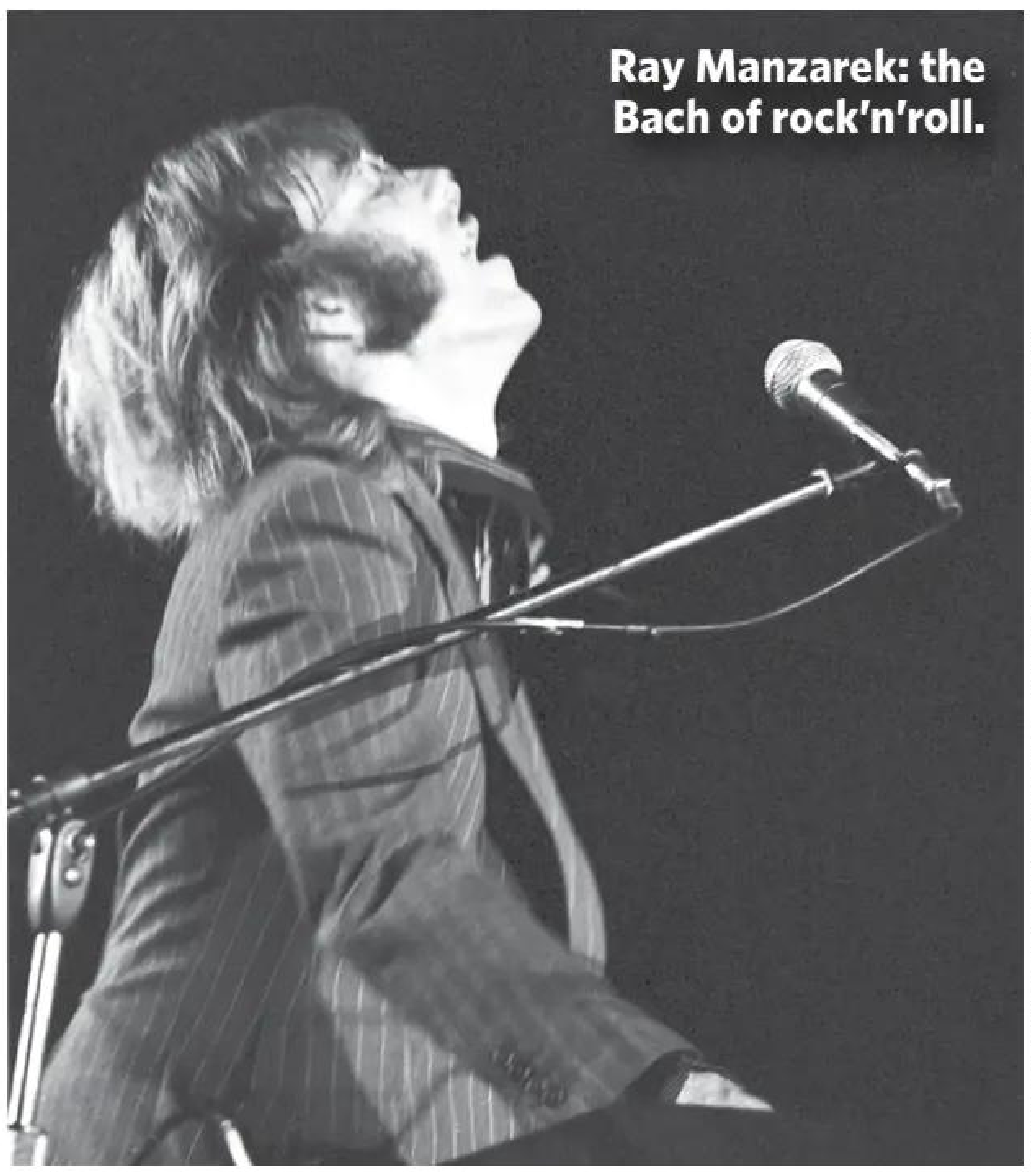
More than just the bespectacled yin to Jim Morrison's leather-clad yang, keyboard maestro **Ray Manzarek** was The Doors' co-founder, architect and greatest cheerleader.

Words: **James McNair**

Think of his Bach-influenced Vox Continental organ hook on *Light My Fire*. Try to imagine *Riders On The Storm* without his ghostly electric piano. Witness his funked-up organ motifs on *Peace Frog* and *The Changeling*, or his delicate, modulating piano on *Waiting For The Sun*'s *Yes, The River Knows*. Ray Manzarek was one of rock's most distinctive and innovative keyboardists, a true renaissance man drawing from a vast pool of diverse influences.

Jim Morrison's lyrics aside, the palpable dread and foreboding of The Doors' music (is there a creepier summer song than *Summer's Almost Gone?*) was in the main evoked by Manzarek's keys. Robby Krieger and John Densmore were no slouches in the chops department either, but it was Ray who had the sounds and imaginative gravitas to carry that weight.

"The beauty of the LA scene in late 1965-1966 was that every band was totally unique", Jac Holzman, the man who signed The Doors to Elektra, told this writer in 2007. "Morrison hadn't ignited in the first three Doors performances I witnessed. It was the musicians in the band that kept me coming back. I was fascinated by the substitution of the bass guitar with piano bass, and the clean architectural line of the music was very striking." Contentious, perhaps, but you could argue it was primarily Manzarek who got The Doors signed.



Ray Manzarek: the Bach of rock'n'roll.

MAIN: TOM HILL/WIREIMAGE/GETTY INSET: MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

> **"Had I known that Jim was so close to death, I would have seen it as a sign, maybe even a cry for help."**
>
> **Ray Manzarek**

Born in Chicago, Illinois on February 12th, 1939, he shared a birthday with Abraham Lincoln and was christened Raymond Daniel Manczarek (sic) Jr. His grandparents had emigrated from Poland in the 1890's; his father, Ray Sr, was a tool and die maker while mum Helena kept house, looking after him and his three brothers. His parents were crate-diggers, seeking out old 78 rpms of blues singers such as Bessie Smith. Mom sang well and dad played guitar and ukulele.

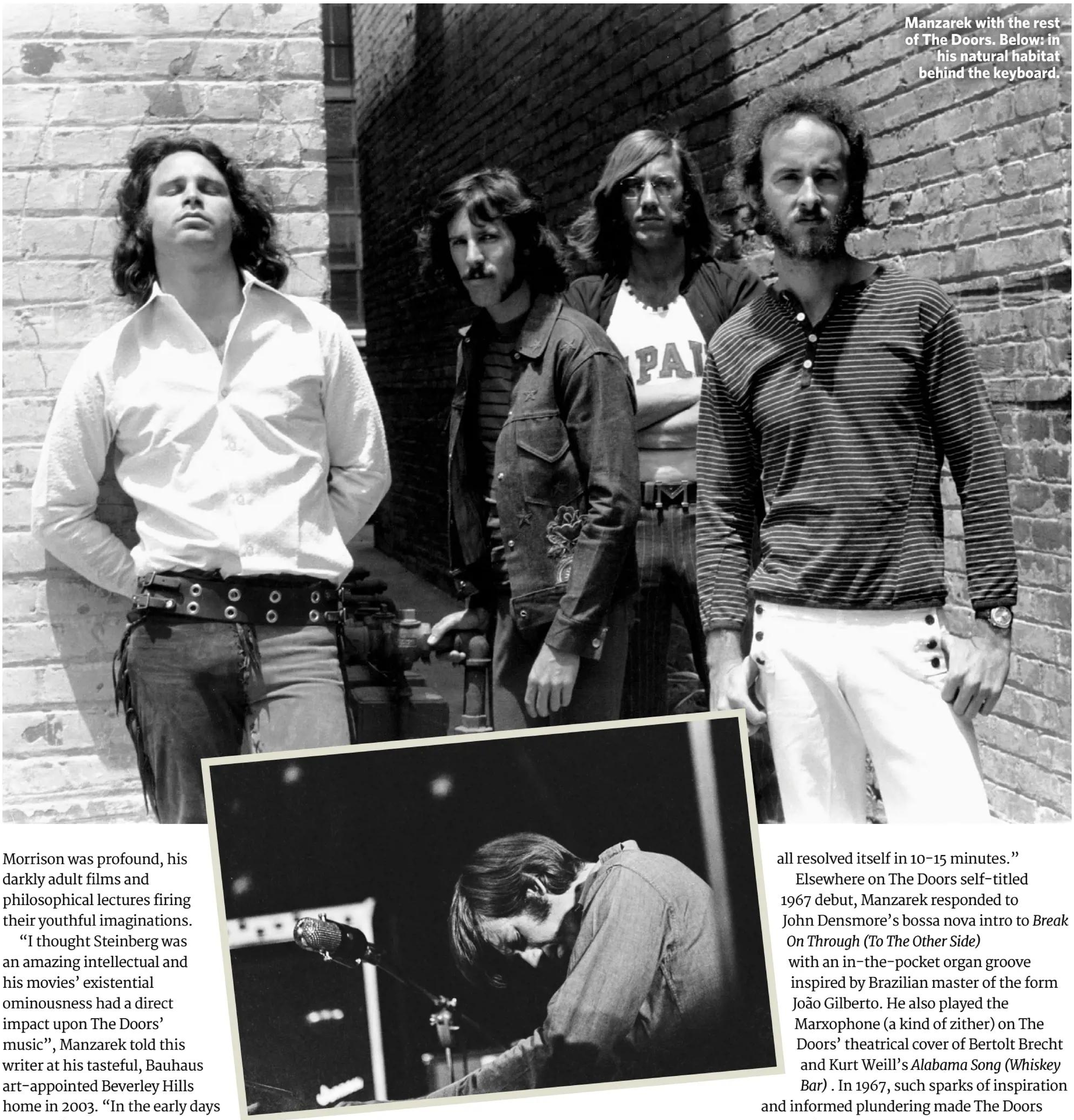
Ray was six foot tall by the time he was 14, loved basketball, and soon achieved a first-rate IQ score of 135. He was schooled in the ways of Bach and Chopin by his first piano teacher, but in his 1998 memoir, *Light My Fire: My Life With The Doors*, Manzarek recalled it was his second piano tutor Bruno Michelotti – "a dance band leader and a real cool cat" – who taught him "virtually everything I know about music".

Michelotti helped Manzarek unlock the mysteries of boogie-woogie piano, empowering Ray's left hand to become The Doors' bass player, too. Boogie-woogie also seemed synonymous with Manzarek's sexual awakening: "It was the rhythm of the act of love. The sway of a woman's hips. The thrust of a man's haunches."

In 1958, Manzarek saw Muddy Waters up close and personal at Chicago's Pepper's Lounge; he and his two pals the only white kids present. Watching Fritz Reiner conduct Debussy's *La Mer* was another epiphany. While studying economics at Chicago's De Paul University, Manzarek became a culture vulture, soaking-up the best of musical theatre (Bernstein's *West Side* Story) and world cinema (Truffaut; Bergman; Kurosawa). He'd barely smoked a joint, far less dropped acid, yet, but, artistically speaking, the doors of perception were already wide open. No wonder he and Jim Morrison had such a meeting of minds.

Manzarek's parents wanted him to become an attorney, but their son had other ideas. Enrolling in the University Of California's Department Of Cinematography in 1962, Ray met future wife Dorothy Fujikawa there and had her act in his student films, but it was Manzarek's meeting with fellow UCLA student and aspiring auteur Jim Morrison that made history. Exchanging dreams and ideas, Morrison and Manzarek would spark the full-flowering of each other's artistry.

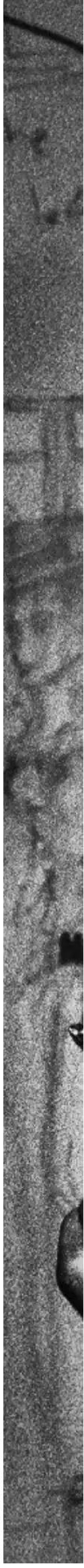
At UCLA they studied under resident tutor Josef von Steinberg, German Expressionist director of Marlene Dietrich in films such as The Blue Angel. Steinberg's influence upon Manzarek and ▷



Manzarek with the rest of The Doors. Below: in his natural habitat behind the keyboard.

EDMUND TESKE/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

INSET: JACK ROSEN/GETTY IMAGES



GIJSBERT HANEKROOT/GETTY

Morrison was profound, his darkly adult films and philosophical lectures firing their youthful imaginations.

"I thought Steinberg was an amazing intellectual and his movies' existential ominousness had a direct impact upon The Doors' music", Manzarek told this writer at his tasteful, Bauhaus art-appointed Beverley Hills home in 2003. "In the early days I always felt that I was Joseph Von Steinberg to Jim's male Dietrich, kind of helping to direct him."

Graduating by May 1965, aspiring poet Jim and classically-trained jazz/blues buff Ray were faces on the emerging 'heads' scene, hanging out at Jim's bohemian apartment in Goshen, West LA. They devoured Huxley's *The Doors Of Perception* and Kerouac's Beat classic *On The Road*, Manzarek citing the latter as "a book that instilled a sense of search and freeing myself." Fuelled by marijuana and Tecate beer, Ray and Jim's discussions also took in the on-going war in Vietnam, Sonny Rollins versus John Coltrane, Debussy versus Stravinsky and many other hot topics.

Fittingly, The Doors formed that same year after Manzarek met Robby Krieger and John Densmore at an LA transcendental meditation class led by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the same guru who would later instruct he Beatles in India.

"The leader guy at the class, Jerry Jarvis, asked if there were any problems", Krieger recalled in 2007. "Ray stuck his hand up and said, 'Yes. No bliss yet!'"

The group's breakthrough single *Light My Fire* was a brilliant Krieger composition, but it was Manzarek's calling card organ motif which made it irresistible, one of the most distinctive things on the airwaves. "I said, 'You guys take a walk to the ocean and I'll have something by the time you come back", Manzarek told me in 2007, recalling being tasked with the song's intro. "The muse jumped into my fingers and made my JS Bach studies come out. I did a [harmonic] circle of fifths and stumbled a bit with the filigrees, but it all resolved itself in 10-15 minutes."

Elsewhere on The Doors self-titled 1967 debut, Manzarek responded to John Densmore's bossa nova intro to *Break On Through (To The Other Side)* with an in-the-pocket organ groove inspired by Brazilian master of the form João Gilberto. He also played the Marxophone (a kind of zither) on The Doors' theatrical cover of Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill's *Alabama Song (Whiskey Bar)* . In 1967, such sparks of inspiration and informed plundering made The Doors sound very fresh. They were not one thing, but many things. A dazzling hybrid with a dark, bluesy underbelly.

Manzarek's playing subtly changed across the six Morrison-fronted Doors albums. It became more refined; broader in scope. The "little Chopin polonaise" he brought to *L.A. Woman*'s *Hyacinth House* sounds like the prototype for Dave Greenfield's organ runs with The Stranglers. Long freed from in-the-studio bass-line responsibility by that point, Manzarek also let his imagination run-free on *L.A. Woman*'s title track while Densmore, Krieger and sometime Elvis Presley bassist Jerry Scheff laid down the groove.

It was mainly Morrison and Krieger who wrote the Doors songs credited to all four of them, but Manzarek was their ideas man. Not the only one, obviously, but Ray tended to ice – and spice – the

Manzarek with Iggy Pop: the two men would briefly play together after the demise of The Doors.

cake. His intro to *Unhappy Girl* from *Strange Days* is all-important, and he added backwards piano to the song after what he described as "a great visitation of energy" in the studio. He also played percussive tack piano – a tinny, altered instrument with drawing-pins or nails placed on its felt-padded hammers – on *People Are Strange*, giving it edge and character.

Manzarek may have pushed the envelope musically, but he was less of a libertine than Morrison personality wise. Still, he certainly partook of mind-altering substances. "Acid is a spiritual thing, a sacred sacrament", he said. "For me, you took LSD when you went to the forest or the beach to attune yourself to the vibrations of the planet."

As for sex, it was certainly something Manzarek talked about enthusiastically – and sometimes in a slightly icky way. His memoir has some rather graphic details about the carnal misadventures of the passionate part of himself he refers to as 'Little Ray', and nor was Manzarek more prudish in interviews or in public. Introducing *People Are Strange* at a 2004 Wembley Arena concert by The Doors Of The 21st Century, he invited the crowd to "play with each other's genitals ever so gently."

> **"If you're going to become a legend, one of the immortals, a god, then you have to die. That's the tragedy."**
>
> **Ray Manzarek**

While Morrison became the wild man, Manzarek like to retain control. The singer had the looks, the voice, the way with words, but he needed direction, a vote of confidence. The oldest member of The Doors by four years (and older than Krieger, the youngest, by seven), he was best-placed to provide these things, his seniority granting a certain authority even if Jim got the girls and the adulation and the headlines.

In later interviews, Manzarek spoke articulately and performatively, that IQ of 135 on display. There was a sense of him not suffering fools gladly and he could seem a tad pretentious as he waxed lyrical about "the 12 astrological archetypes", explaining how Morrison was "Dionysian" (excessive, addictive, charismatic), while he, by contrast, was a balancing "Apollonian" sort (driven, ordered, favours thinking over feeling).

Perhaps Manzarek was just trying to breathe life into a story that had been told and re-told. He portrayed *Riders On The Storm* as a portent of Jim's death: "That whispered voice you hear was the last vocal Jim recorded on planet earth. It was ▷

Ray Manzarek: February 12, 1939 – May 20, 2013. Right: Sunset Strip club the Whisky A Go Go pays tribute after his death.

the voice of the spirits, calling the shaman out of his physical form and into the next realm of existence. Had I known that Jim was so close to death, I would have seen it as a sign, maybe even a cry for help. But he was only 27 years old and it was impossible for anyone to believe that Jim was about to die."

After Morrison's death in Paris in 1971, Manzarek – and sometimes Robby Krieger – led The Doors from the front on 1971's *Other Voices* and 1972's *Full Circle*. Alas, there was no getting over the charisma-deficit in Jim's absence, and Ray and Robby's vocals aren't great. They did notch up one final hit in mainland Europe and Latin America with Manzarek's *The Mosquito*, a hooky novelty song that found him rhyming *'mosquito'* with *'my burrito'* as he sang about a pest-compromised snack.

In 1978 came the final 'new' album to bear The Doors name, *An American Prayer*. It grafted recordings of documentary dialogue, live concert talk and Morrison's poetry to music old and new. Some deemed it a travesty. Former Doors producer Paul A. Rothschild went further, calling it "a rape of Jim Morrison." Here were the seeds of the controversies and internal feuds that would dog the surviving members' handling of The Doors' legacy from there on in.

A few years earlier, Manzarek's 1974 solo debut *The Golden Scarab* had already cemented the sense that, musically speaking, he could be something of a loose cannon. Packing esoteric spoken-word and riotous percussion, it was ridiculed and praised in fairly equal measure, but its new-age Afro-funk is ripe for reappraisal, even if song titles such as *Oh Thou Precious Nectar (A Little Fart)* are off-putting.

The same year found Manzarek teaming with Iggy Pop, whom he'd long thought of as the ideal successor to Jim Morrison in The Doors. Having

PETER TARNOFF/MEDIAPUNCH/SHUTTERSTOCK

just left The Stooges, Iggy was being managed by Doors overseer Danny Sugerman. He and Manzarek rehearsed for months and even played live together (no tapes or footage have surfaced), but it wasn't to be, perhaps because Iggy's drug addiction was raging, and he'd need to follow David Bowie to Berlin to dry-out.

Instead, 1975 brought Manzarek's second solo LP, the jazzier, bluesier *The Whole Thing Started With Rock & Roll Now It's Out Of Control*. It featured Joe Walsh and Patti Smith, but not even they could save it from obscurity and poor sales.

Re-booting again in 1977, Ray formed Nite City, whose members included future Blondie bassist Nigel Harrison and drive-time radio friendly singer Noah James. But despite chart-friendly AOR leanings, the group failed to make an impact. That their second and final LP, 1978's *Golden Days Diamond Night*s, was only released in West Germany spoke volumes.

Manzarek would soon busy himself producing LA punk band X's debut album *Los Angeles* (which included a cover of The Doors' *Soul Kitchen*), and their next three records. His 1983 solo album *Carmina Burana* occasionally brought a hitherto unimagined Chas'n'Dave vibe to Carl Orff's demonic-sounding 1935 cantata, but with famed composer Phillip Glass co-producing it was also further proof of his pedigree.

Whisky a Go Go
REST IN PEACE
RAY MANZAREK
THANKS FOR ALL THE MEMORIES

CHELSEA LAUREN/WIREIMAGE/GETTY

> **"Acid is a spiritual thing, a sacred sacrament. You took LSD to attune yourself to the vibrations of the planet."**
>
> **Ray Manzarek**

RAY MANZAREK
The Golden Scarab

RAY MANZAREK
THE WHOLE THING STARTED WITH ROCK & ROLL NOW IT'S OUT OF CONTROL

As the 80s rolled on and appreciation for his former's band's legacy grew, Manzarek's work with The Doors was a passport to all kinds of collaborations. In 1987, when Echo & the Bunnymen recorded a cover of *People Are Strange* for vampire flick *The Lost Boys*, Manzarek was invited to recreate his parts and subsequently brought his organ prowess to the Bunnymen's *Bedbugs And Ballyhoo*, a song from the British band's self-titled 1987 album.

More than a decade would pass before his the surprise resurrection of The Doors. The catalyst was a 2000 episode of VH-1's *Storytellers* series dedicated to the band. An ecstatic Perry Farrell of Jane's Addiction and Scott Weiland of Stone Temple Pilots were among the stars booked to sing live backed by Manzarek, Krieger and Densmore, but it was another guest - The Cult's Morrison-esque singer Ian Astbury - who got the gig fronting an incarnation of The Doors which began touring again in 2002.

Densmore was supposed to be involved in the reunions, but he pulled out, claiming tinnitus issues, and eventually ended up gaining an injunction which forced Manzarek, Krieger and Astbury to perform as 'The Doors Of The 21st Century.' A Morrison-less Doors wasn't worthy of the name, Densmore now griped. But Manzarek was quick to defend himself via CNN news: "The guy who put the band together is performing with the guy who wrote *Light My Fire*. If we're not The Doors, who is?"

Densmore and Manzarek had often feuded and had long-standing differences about how the Doors' music and estate should be managed (the part in Manzarek's memoir where he recalled telling Jim to regard John as "his dumb kid brother" probably didn't help). But the pair made their peace prior to Manzarek dying of bile duct cancer in Rosenheim, Germany on May 20, 2013. "I called him and thank God he picked up and we talked about his illness", Densmore recalled in 2023. "I felt so much better."

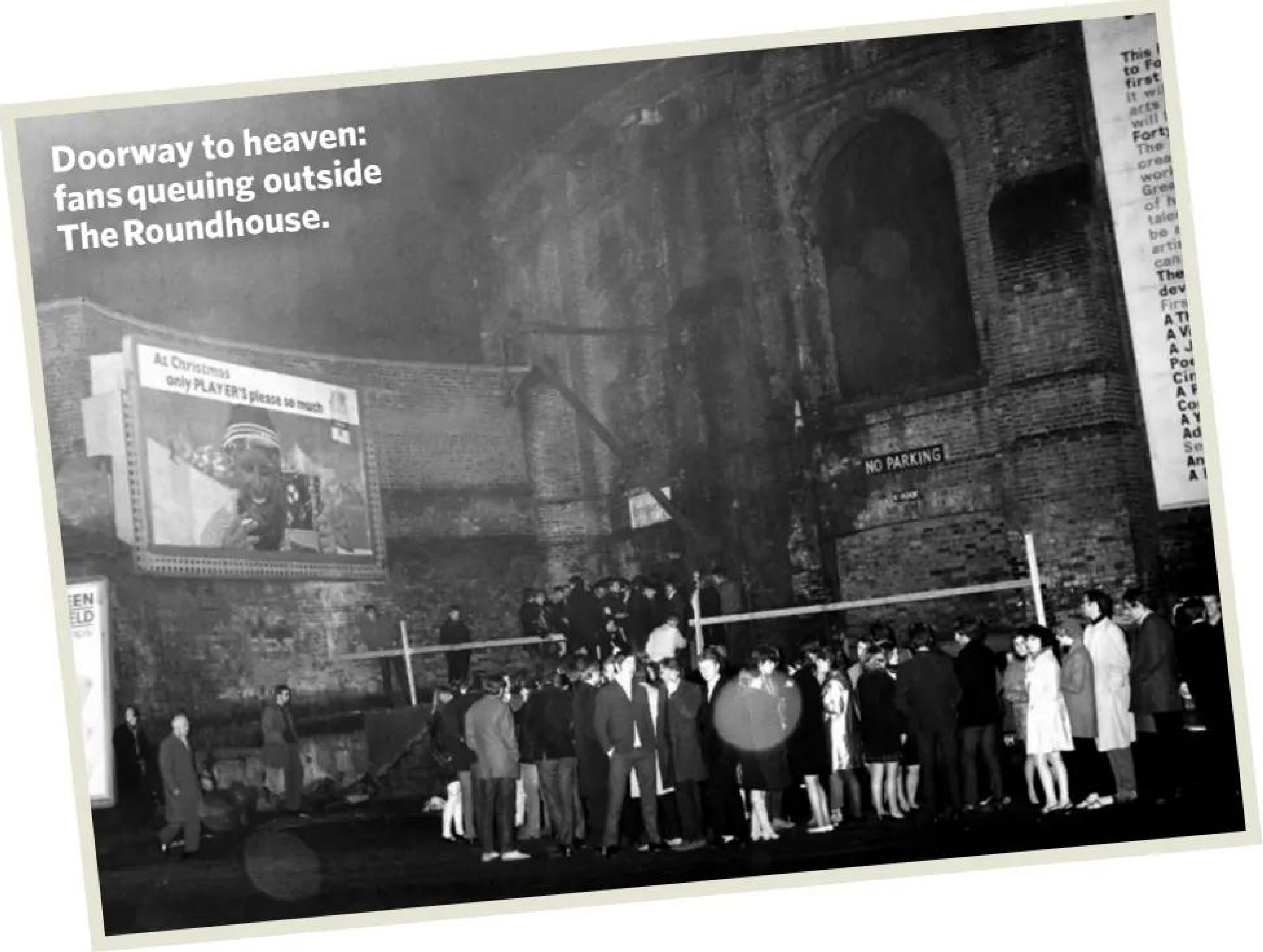
"If you're going to become a legend - one of the immortals, a god," Manzarek himself said in 2011, "then you have to die. That's the tragedy."

He was talking about Jim Morrison, of course, but his own passing aged 74 brought a kind of immortality too. Ray Manzarek is alive again every time we hear *Light My Fire*.

The Doors brought controversy with them when they played their debut UK gigs in September 1968, but over two unforgettable nights at London's Roundhouse it was their incendiary music that did the talking.

ROUNDHOUSE BLUES

Words: **Johnny Black**


Doorway to heaven: fans queuing outside The Roundhouse.

By the time The Doors arrived in London to play their first ever UK shows, on September 6 and 7, 1968, at converted London train shed The Roundhouse, their notoriety was reaching its peak in the US. The band's arrival in Britain was greeted by howls of protest, not least by moral campaigner Mary Whitehouse. "The Doors, who are a political extremist organisation, are now in England," she wrote in a telegram to the Chief Superintendent of the Special Branch.

But for the capital's hip elite it was a chance to see just what the fuss was all about. The Roundhouse bill (for two shows on two nights) was bolstered by co-headliners and fellow West Coast psychedelic ambassadors Jefferson Airplane, plus The Crazy World Of Arthur Brown, Terry Reid, Blossom Toes and Blonde On Blonde.

The Who, Traffic, Cream and A-list movie couple Terence Stamp and Julie Christie were out representing the capital's music and film royalty, while Granada TV sent along their cameras to film proceedings for a documentary, *The Doors Are Open*.

Joss Mullinger (audience): I was a public schoolboy at Christ's Hospital in Sussex. I was seventeen, and my friends and I were mad about The Doors. Polydor Records in London was distributing Elektra, so I'd written to them in early 1968 and they sent us monthly newsletters, which is how I knew about the Doors shows.

Jorma Kaukonen (guitarist, Jefferson Airplane): Even the physical configuration of The Roundhouse – a circular building – was unusual, different and very cool. For us, coming from the West Coast, there was a Mecca aspect to coming to London. It was very exciting to be there, not just because of The Beatles and the Stones but because of the whole scene.

Clive Selwood (general manager, Elektra Records UK): The Doors arrived red-eyed from an overnight flight from the US and were met by the Granada team, who stuck cameras and microphones in their faces and asked them to identify themselves as they stepped off the plane. Ray was quiet and studious, Robby was so shy that he appeared stoned and inarticulate, John was slick and looking for aggravation, and Jim was enigmatic and almost unbelievably beautiful.

Arthur Brown: We had played with both The Doors and Jefferson Airplane in America, which meant we already had a connection. [The Crazy World's co-manager] Kit Lambert engineered a meeting between me and Jim Morrison in La Chaisse club in Soho a couple of days before the gigs. It was a strange meeting. Lambert bought us both drinks, then we stood at the bar in silence for about twenty minutes until Jim noticed something playing on the radio. He asked me: "Who's that on the radio?" And I replied: "I dunno." That was the total extent of our communication.

Mick Houghton (audience member): We had tickets for the second show on the first night. It's worth remembering that neither The Doors or Jefferson Airplane were considered huge bands here. Neither of them had had major hit singles here.

John Sheppard (director of Granada TV documentary* The Doors Are Open*): Morrison was in a thoroughly pissed-off mood. The rest of the band were staying at the Royal Lancaster, he and his girlfriend had their own flat in Eaton Square. And he had already missed the soundcheck.

Grace Slick (vocalist, Jefferson Airplane): I remember talking to Jim backstage… he was so high I had no idea what he was talking about. I asked him a routine question and he'd say something like: "The green mountain has a great dawn coming." I don't know how conscious he was of what he was doing, but he used himself as a lab rat. He was on a mission to see how far you can take the human mind… where it will go if you push it with chemicals.

Caroline Coon (founder, drugs charity Release): We had an office in situ at the gigs over those two days, to help kids who had problems with drugs. We were getting one per cent or two per cent of the ticket price from the promoters, Middle Earth, to cover our costs, so we took part in all the discussions about how the gigs would be managed. The two bands were very competitive.

Robby Krieger (guitarist, The Doors): We always had a kind of running battle with The Jefferson Airplane because we were both California groups and it was a kinda rivalry.

Jim Cregan (guitarist, Blossom Toes): We shared a dressing room with The Doors and I remember there was a fuss about who was going to headline.

ALAMY X2

Lighting a fire: The Doors at The Roundhouse, their first ever UK shows.

> “It was probably the most informed and receptive audience I’ve ever seen in my life.” Jim Morrison

Ray Manzarek (keyboard player, The Doors): “We’re gonna go on first…” “No, you’re gonna go…” “We’re biggest…” “No, we’re bigger…” We tossed it around back and forth.

Caroline Coon: I remember being in the room for that light-bulb moment when it was suggested that they could maybe share top billing – one band one day, the other the next.

Derek Grant (reviewer, NME): The audience, over two thousand of them, had been sitting patiently since seven-thirty, and they had to wait a further two hours before the action began. The stage darkened and the audience cheered as dim figures appeared and took up positions behind drums, organ and on guitar. The stage lights went up as John Densmore, Ray Manzarek and Robby Krieger launched into *Back Door Man* to herald the arrival of The Doors’ frontman, Jim Morrison. He walked majestically on stage clad in a tight black leather suit, white shirt and brown shoes.

Brian Godding (guitar/vocals, Blossom Toes): The really impressive revelation was the sound system they brought over. It was light years ahead of what was available over here. It was all Acoustic amplification with JBL speakers, which sounded like a giant hi-fi system, really clear. For what they were doing – pretty minimalistic and dramatic – it worked so well.

Ray Manzarek: We’d heard a lot about you wild people over here and we thought we were coming to a hotbed of primitive ecstasy, and we were quite surprised… “Wait a minute, this is the crazy English audience we’ve been hearing about in California?” Everyone was very reserved, very proper and very correct. But it was a great show.

Arthur Brown: I remember Morrison, standing alone in the light, dressed entirely in black leather, performing *The Celebration Of The Lizard*. That was a revolutionary way for a rock artist to perform. It was more like a leading poet coming out and reading his poetry but with a rock beat behind it. He didn’t dance, he just writhed around in a snake-like way. It was quite stunning.

Ray Manzarek: A lot of people thought he got electrocuted. I dropped the amplifier top to make a loud gunshot, and people swore he was electrocuted.

Brian Godding: The Doors’ music was very minimal. Their keyboardist, Ray Manzarek, stood out because they didn’t have a bass player, so he was playing bass runs on the organ at the same time as playing his main parts.

John Sheppard: Round about midnight, the chief engineer came to me after we’d finished and said that we had a fault on video and that the whole of Friday night was lost.

Mick Houghton: Me and my friends were still queuing up at two in the morning to get in. We formed an orderly queue and stood there patiently for two hours. I was more interested in seeing Jefferson Airplane, but I remember their set being pretty shambolic. Everything I liked about them – the vocal harmonies, Grace Slick’s pitch-perfect voice, the balance of acoustic and electric guitars – none of that was done well live.

John Tobler (journalist): The Doors came back for their second set at about four o’clock in the morning, by which time all the cameramen were home in bed. Without the cameras there was a noticeable drop in aggravation, and the group played a superb set.

Jim Morrison: The reason why the second sets were much more exciting both nights was the presence of the TV crews on stage and in the hall [for each night’s first set]. It’s that voyeurism thing. It introduces an objective element that turns people off to a real communion.

Joss Mullinger (audience): Me and two of my friends went to the second night, the Saturday. We had to sit outside for ages. I took a couple of photographs outside which show all the people waiting. Finally we made our way up those rickety stairs to the door. I remember it as a vast, cavernous space, a barn of a place, very rudimentary, with great big white sheets hanging round the stage.

John Sheppard: When we [Granada camera crew] arrived at The Roundhouse it was all sweetness and light. Maybe someone had had a talk with Morrison, I don’t know. Anyway, come the Saturday evening I was ready to do it right, the crew were up to the mark and The Doors played a fantastic set.

Jim Morrison: The audience was one of the best we’ve ever had. In the States they’re there to enjoy themselves as much as they come to hear you. But at The Roundhouse they were there to listen. It was like going back to the roots. It stimulated us. They took me by surprise, because I expected them to be a little resistant, a little reserved, but they were fantastic. It was probably the most informed, receptive audience I’ve ever seen in my life. I think I enjoyed The Roundhouse more than any other date for years.

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SHAMEN'S BLUES

Recorded during a period of problems, unease and controversy, **The Doors**' fourth album, *The Soft Parade,* was not the record that anyone expected them to make – including the band.

Words: **Max Bell**

In July 1968, The Doors began working on their fourth album, which would eventually be titled *The Soft Parade*. The mood was up and down, as usual. They were the first group to record at their record label's new Elektra Sound Recorders studio on La Cienega Boulevard, one of their favourite Los Angeles haunts. They had anticipated free studio time, but Elektra head Jac Holzman stunned them with just a 10 per cent discount.

> **"People say [*The Soft Parade*] doesn't sound like The Doors, which is partly understandable, but it was an experiment."**
>
> **Robby Krieger**

Keyboard player Ray Manzarek summed up their displeasure: "We were the first group to record there. We were all excited at the prospects of breaking the cherry of a brand-new, state-of-the-art recording studio. And we thought it was going to be for free. Hell, Jac Holzman built the damned place with profits from Doors' record sales. Everybody called the new facility 'the house The Doors built', so why shouldn't we record for free?"

On the plus side, singer Jim Morrison seemed eager to test an unfamiliar environment. He brought in the song *Wild Child,* and also worked up a mellow groove about his fractious relationship with his girlfriend Pamela Courson, *Who Scared You,* written with guitarist Robby Krieger. The band, augmented by bassist Harvey Brooks (sometimes Doug Lubahn), an ally of drummer John Densmore, worked up a very jazzy track, *Queen Of The Highway*, which was shelved, but rocked up for next album *Morrison Hotel* in 1970. The original was the weirdest thing they ever did. There were more knockabout pieces to keep Jim positive: the Latino Sam The Sham pastiche *Push Push*, Morrison's *Whisky, Mystics And Men*, and *Woman Is A Devil* (these appeared on the 2006 box set, *Perception)*. But in real time, July '68 was about the present.

The single *Hello, I Love You* was about to hit the No.1 spot (their second-biggest seller after *Light My Fire*), its parent album *Waiting For The Sun* having been released on July 3. Three years on, to that day, Jim Morrison would be found dead in Paris. The Doors never made it to France while Jim was alive, but rehearsals began for their one and only European tour, including a date at the New Roundhouse in Chalk Farm, London, where *Wild Child* got an airing and Jim told the audience "We played your *Top Of The Pops* yesterday [Sept 5], did *Hello, I Love You* [cheers]. Not goin' on that show ever again." ▷

Morrison with The Doors at the Hollywood Bowl, July 5, 1968.

The Doors arrive at Heathrow airport to begin their European tour, starting off at London's Roundhouse on September 6, 1968.

The Doors in London in 1968.

GETTY x3

> **"I wasn't into the idea of doing an album with an orchestra, but I went along with it. And I liked it then and I still do." Robby Krieger**

The European dates – London, Germany and Scandinavia – were small-scale compared to the status the band enjoyed in America, selling out the Hollywood Bowl (July '68) and pocketing big bucks. Mick Jagger and Marianne Faithfull were in attendance in the Bowl's front row. The Stones singer told producer Jimmy Miller: "I thought it was very boring." Jagger should have gone instead to the Singer Bowl in Queens, New York, where a combined Doors/Who show turned into a battleground, or waited until Morrison flipped completely at the Cleveland Public Hall, shouting obscenities and diving into the fans.

When their 17-day European tour was over, The Doors minus Morrison resumed rehearsals. Jim and Pam holed up in a rented suite in London's Eaton Square and did the tourist bit. They were clean for a while, until Morrison's new buddy, the American poet Michael McClure, joined them for a week. He recalls: "We went out a lot. We started in the Soho clubs, where we got busted a few times for being drunk and disorderly. One night we decided to take a taxi to the Lake Country [sic] and the bobbies busted us again. I guess taking a taxi that far is not done ordinarily."

On returning to Elektra Sound, Morrison walked in to discover that producer Paul Rothchild had decided: "We can't turn out the same album again. Let's be different. How about we add the LA Philharmonic strings and hot horns?" Given their jazzier backgrounds, Manzarek and Densmore were compliant, Krieger not so much. Today he tells *Classic Rock* "I wasn't into the idea of doing an album with an orchestra, but I went along with it. And I liked it then and I still do. People say it doesn't sound like The Doors, which is partly understandable, but it was an experiment. The Beatles and Stones had used strings, so had Love, whose *Forever Changes* we all dug. My view then was: 'So aren't we copying them? We're not actually being that different.'"

In October '68, Beatle George Harrison arrived at the studio. He told The Doors: "What you're doing reminds me of us doing the *Sgt. Pepper* album."

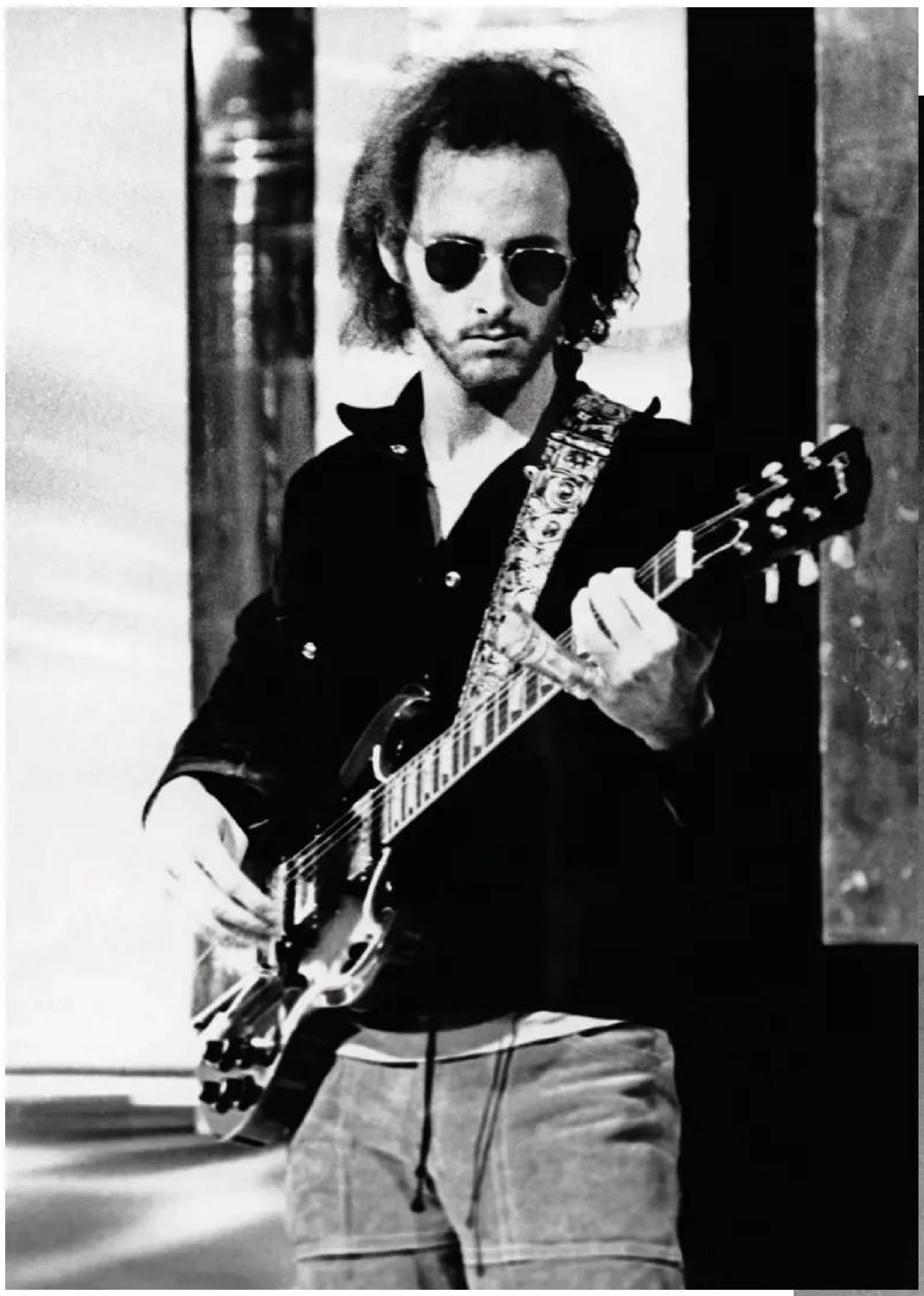
Krieger says that integrating outside elements meant "endless remixing. It was a long, drawn-out process. We spent more money [$80,000] and time on that than any other album. And Jim was hard to find. His drinking problem wasn't as bad as on *Waiting For The Sun*, because he had started making a film, *Feast Of Friends*, which kept him busy."

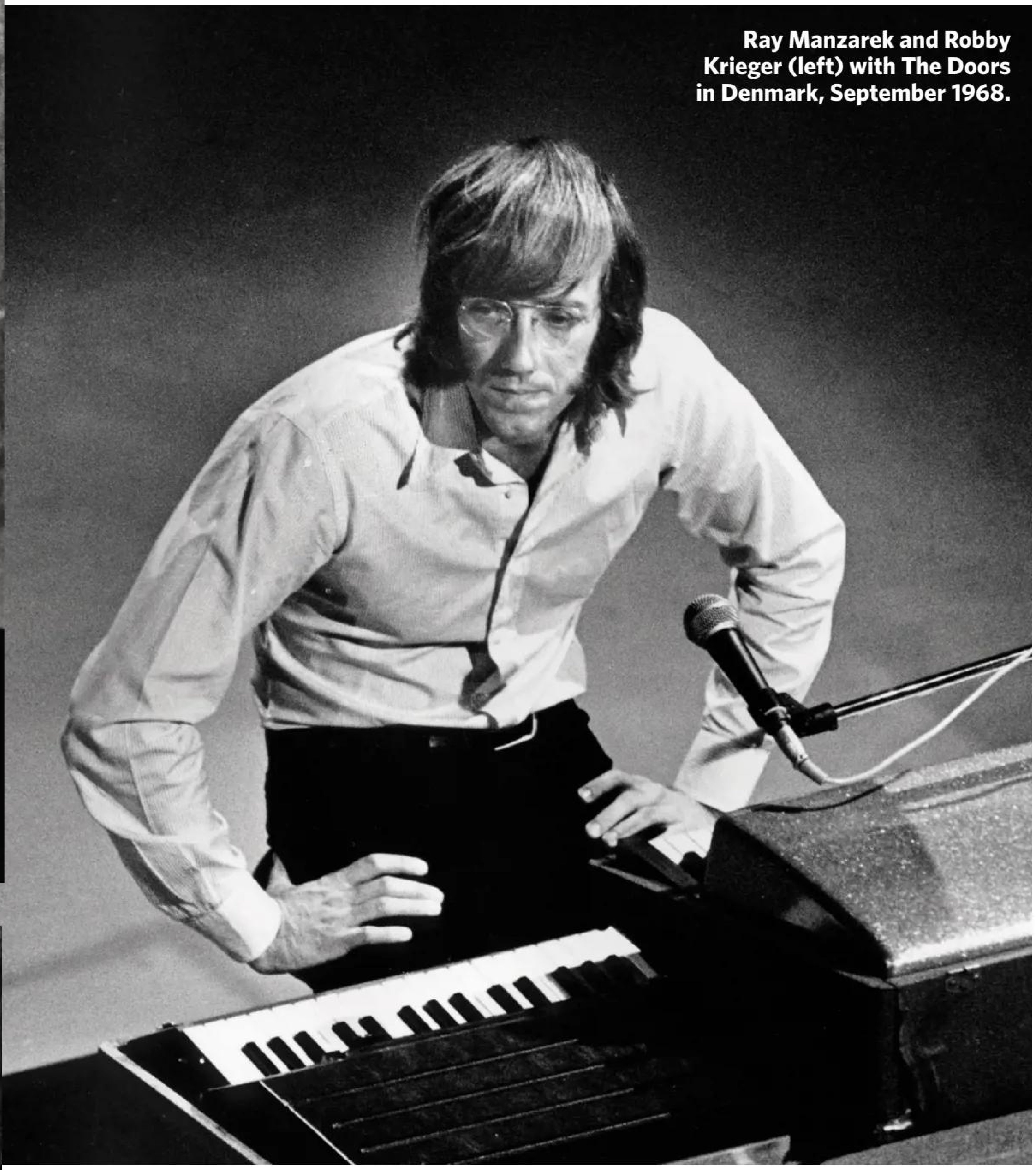
With Morrison short on material, laid-back transcendental meditation-loving Robby stepped up, offering *Touch Me*, *Tell All The People* and the Love-coloured (think *Alone Again Or*) *Wishful Sinful*, all of which became pre-album singles.

"I wrote my new songs with orchestral charts in mind, and enjoyed the challenge, but Jim didn't like all my lyrics," the guitarist recalled. "*Touch Me* was originally called *Hit Me*. Jim and Paul objected to that, though it was a harmless reference to one of our band games of Blackjack [aka 21 or pontoon] where you shout: 'Hit me with a card' to the dealer. Making it *Touch Me* turned it into more of a love song. I was fine about it."

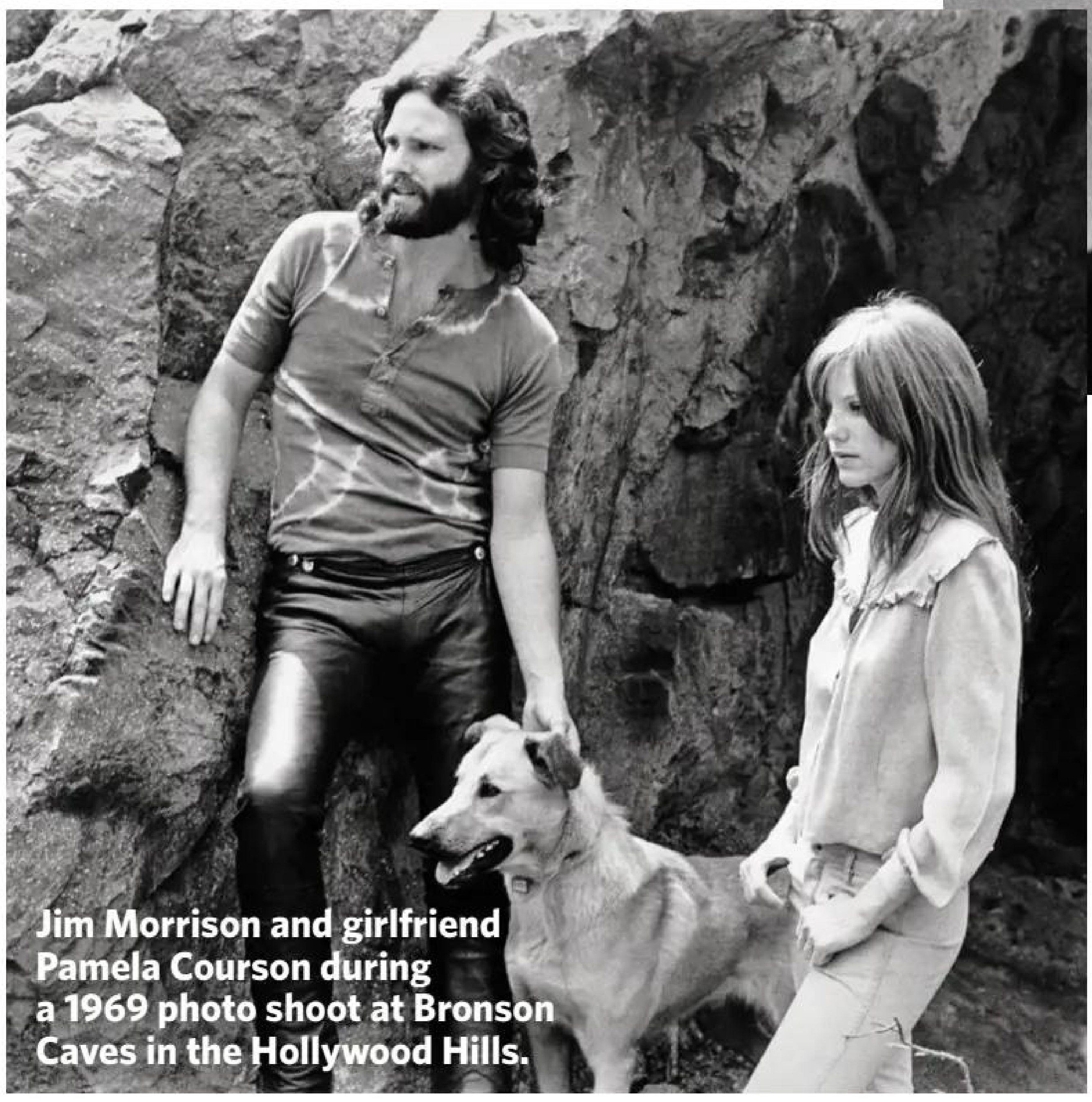
Morrison also baulked at singing the line in *Tell All The People*: *'Can't you see me growing, get your guns'*. "Considering the message in *Five To One* it seemed pretty mild," Krieger said, laughing. "I guess Jim thought people might take it literally."

Whatever, Morrison decided the songs should be attributed, although they didn't credit The Four Seasons – Featuring The "Sound" Of Frankie Valli





Ray Manzarek and Robby Krieger (left) with The Doors in Denmark, September 1968.



Jim Morrison and girlfriend Pamela Courson during a 1969 photo shoot at Bronson Caves in the Hollywood Hills.

> **"We went out a lot. We started in the Soho clubs, where we got busted a few times for being drunk and disorderly."**
>
> **Poet Michael McClure on hanging with The Doors in London in '68**

for copping the opening licks from their '67 B-side *C'mon Marianne* for the intro and bridge of *Touch Me*.

"We did 'borrow', on occasion," Krieger admits. "*Tell All The People* borrowed from Lead Belly's *Fannin' Street Blues*, though my go-to version was by Dave 'Snaker' Ray from the white blues trio Koerner, Ray And Glover. I made it like a shout-out to the hippies, a psychedelic blues, rag and holler. Jim did amazing vocals throughout. Considering he knew nothing about music, never took a lesson, he was great, simply gifted. When we first started he wasn't, but once we reached the clubs he became transformed. He was always on pitch, never flat or sharp, and if he wandered in the studio I let him know. In that regard he was like Elvis, although he sang in church. I don't believe Jim had any interest in singing at all until he wrote his own songs."

Krieger might have been surprised if he'd read a 1968 interview in which Morrison put his role this way: "In the beginning, I wrote most of the songs, the words and music(!). On each successive album, Robby contributed more songs. On this album it's almost split between us. We have a very different vision of reality. So I felt it was time. We're a partnership, see? Artistically and financially. In the beginning, a lot of it was in the interest of unity, to keep it together. Now that the unity's not that much in jeopardy, I thought it was time people knew who was saying what. So this will be the first album when we'll be giving writer credits and I think we'll just keep doing that. I didn't realise people took songs so seriously and it made me wonder whether I ought to consider the consequences.

"Musically, as a guitar player, he [Krieger] is more complex – like, chord changes, beautiful melodies and that – and my thing is more in a blues vein: long, rambling, basic and primitive."

With the new album nowhere near complete, on December 4 The Doors appeared on US TV show *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*, with the house orchestra, for *Wild Child*, and tenor sax man Curtis Amy, who played on the album, blew a storm over *Touch Me*.

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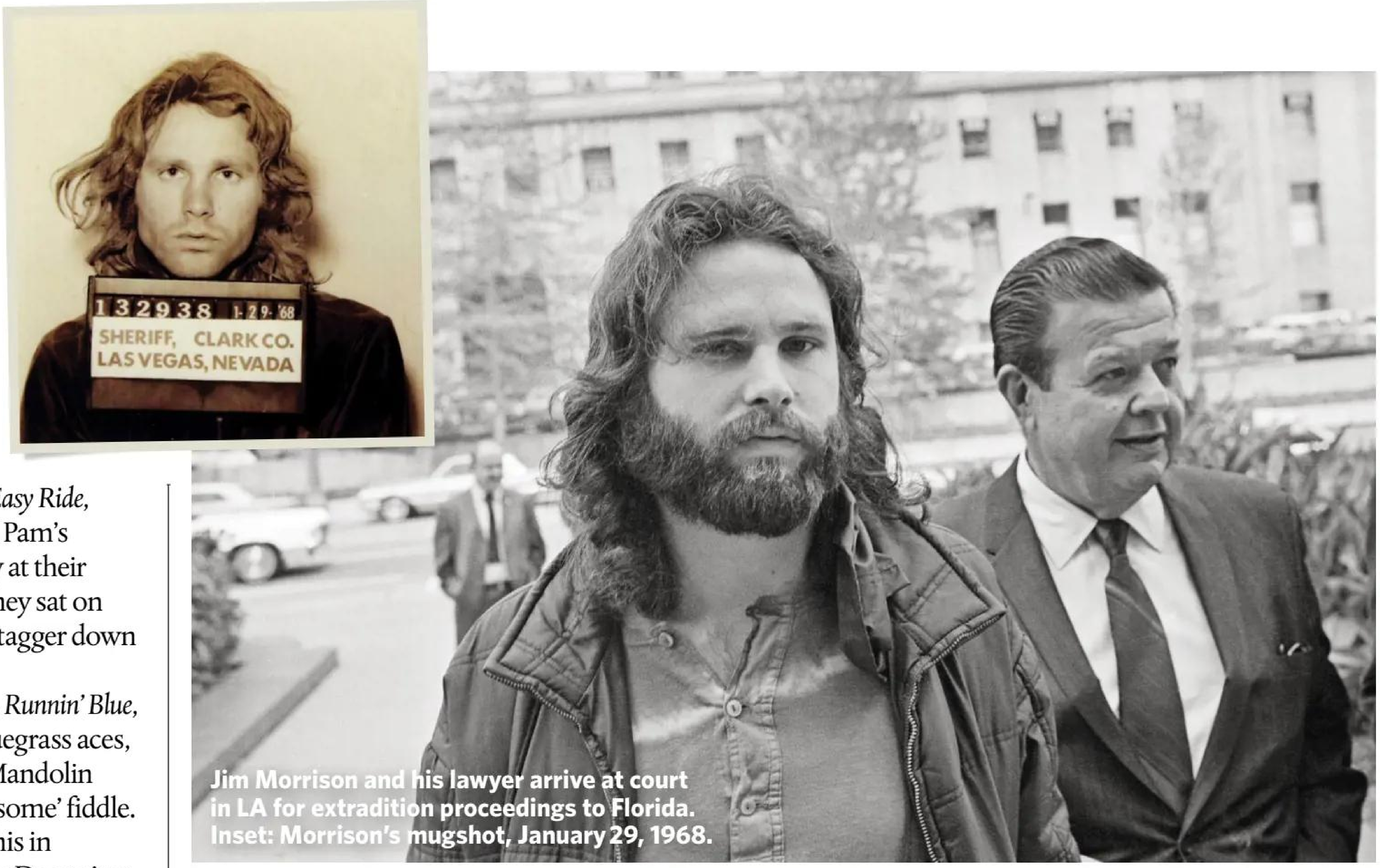
To celebrate this event and the release of *Touch Me* (which hit No.3 on the *Billboard* Hot 100 and No.1 in the Cashbox equivalent), Elektra Records trade advertised alongside a Rorschach-style image of a young woman touching her hands. 'Last night, while the over-30s watched *Bonanza*, 27.1 million of the turned-on tuned in to *Smothers Brothers* and heard The Doors break their next million-selling single… Stock it now. You will be richer for the experience.' Elektra certainly were.

On December 14 the band played the LA Forum, Inglewood with a string sextet, brass and 32 amps. "A good show," Krieger recalls, "but way too much trouble to repeat. We did it again, smaller scale, at Madison Square Garden in January '69."

Before the Forum show, Morrison was dispirited at what lay ahead. He was The Doors 24/7, no escape. The others switched off after work and enjoyed relatively average lives. "I don't know what will happen," the singer mused. "I guess we'll continue like this for a while. Then to get our vitality back, maybe we'll have to get out of the whole business. ▷

the doors/the soft parade



Jim Morrison and his lawyer arrive at court in LA for extradition proceedings to Florida. Inset: Morrison's mugshot, January 29, 1968.

Maybe we'll go to an island by ourselves and start creating again."

Rothchild, beset by cocaine addiction and a massive ego, delighted in flogging the band into the ground. But when Morrison returned, just as the new single *Wishful Sinful* was floundering badly, he was pleased to hear two light, humorous, orchestra-free pop songs with edge: the revolutionary call-to-arms *Do It*, and *Easy Ride*, a berserk polka of a love song directed Pam's opiated way. Both were written swiftly at their home on 8021 Rothdell Trail, where they sat on the balcony and watched the hippies stagger down what they called Love Street.

There was also a country hoedown, *Runnin' Blue*, a post-album-single flop, featuring bluegrass aces, the Virginian Jesse McReynolds (aka Mandolin Man) and Jim Buchanan on 'high lonesome' fiddle. If the Flying Burrito Brothers turned this in everyone's going 'cosmic country'; The Doors just took flak for it. The song was intro'd by another Lead Belly steal, from his song *Po' Howard*, with Morrison adapting the lyric to *'Poor Otis, dead and gone, left me here to sing his song/Pretty little girl with the red dress on, poor Otis, dead and gone'* and the *Dock Of The Bay* bridge that referred to recently deceased soul legend Otis Redding. Morrison used the vocal riff live before, at the Winterland in San Francisco in '67. Redding was scheduled to support The Doors in at the Winterland gig, but he never made it.

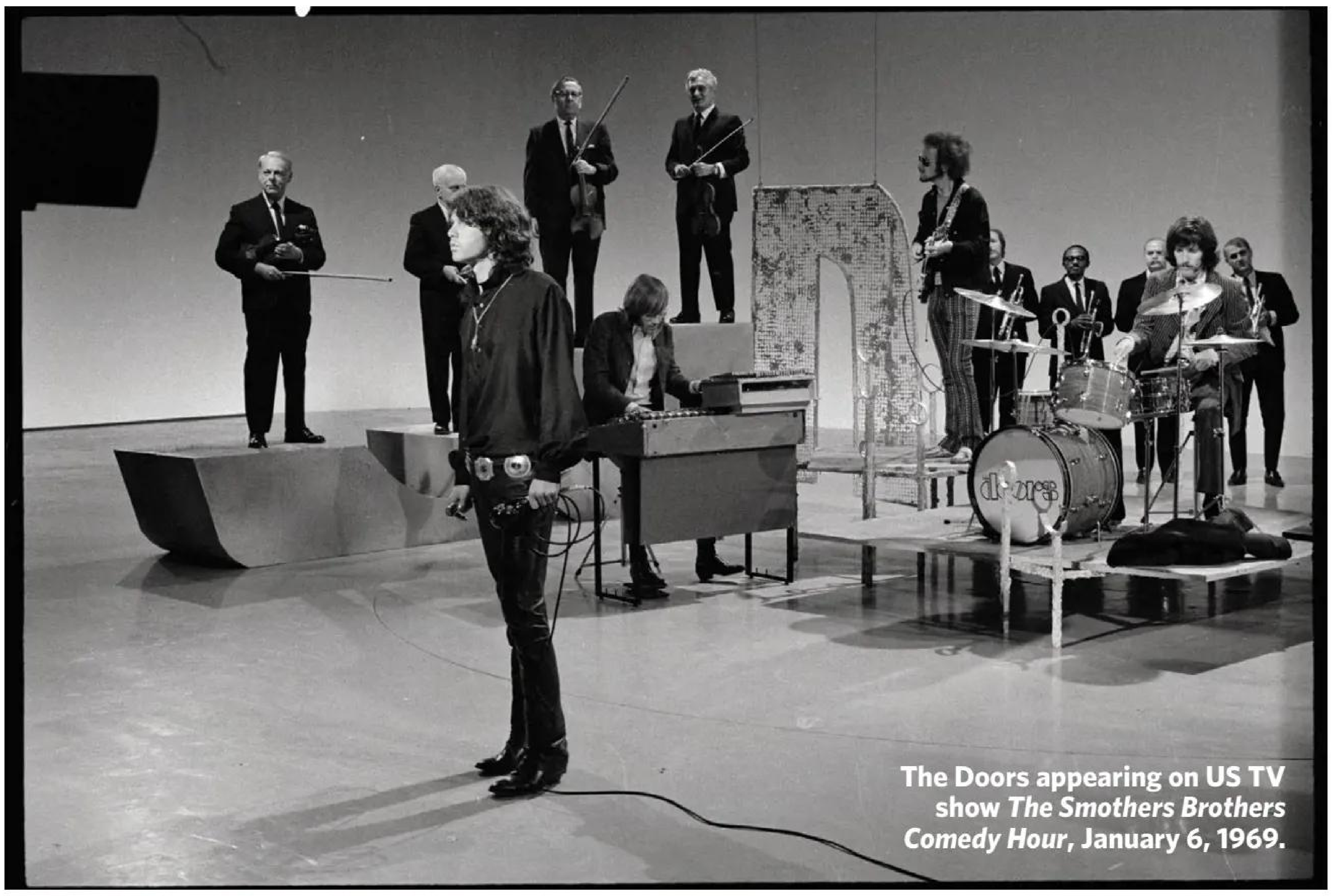
In fine fettle, Morrison took to the studio chalkboard, open to anyone's nonsense, and wrote: "I think I know the reasin but I can't spell it." Yet, that February 25, Morrison showed the others a darker tirade, *Rock Is Dead*.

A band meal with engineer Bruce Botnick, but not Rothchild, was held, where structure for Jim's song poem took place. Eyebrows were raised at lines like *'As long as I got breath, the death of rock is the death of me. And rock is dead. Well we're dead… Rock is dead.'* Perhaps not surprisingly, that ditty stayed in the can for years, though bootlegs surfaced, and it's in the new box set. It's no picnic in the park.

> **"Once you have a sound, and you change that, people hate you. But we didn't ever let that deter us."**
>
> **Robby Krieger**

Following this burst of activity, Jim resumed alcohol abuse on an epic scale, his senses inflamed by watching all five nights of the Living Theatre troupe at Bovard Auditorium, USC. Their MO – nudity, chaos, riot theory – appealed to the conflicted singer who on one hand stated: "When I said I am interested in activity that has no meaning, I was being ironic. Apparently they just think I'm mad".

Concentrate on the 'mad' now, because on March 1 at the Dinner Key Auditorium, Jim turned his Living Theatre experience into rock'n'roll suicide, allegedly exposing himself (in reality he didn't), leading to his most serious arrest yet, for Lewd and Lascivious Behavior, Indecent Exposure, Public Profanity and Public Drunkenness. And public masturbation. Given his previous rap sheet, there was every chance of at least two years in one of Florida's more unpleasant maximum-security jails. Morrison was shit-scared. Who wouldn't be?



The Doors appearing on US TV show *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*, January 6, 1969.

That incident – let's call it 'Miami' – threw the new album into chaos. On the bright side, Miami inspired an unrepentant Morrison to add his final songs for the record: the enigmatic but jaunty *Shaman's Blues*, and a typically lengthy end piece he called *The Soft Parade*.

Krieger: "*Shaman's Blues* had a real Doors feel, could have been on *Strange Days*. Jim brought it in and we finished it in one day, a very simple thing. Did he think he was a shaman? Probably not, but he was genuinely read-up on the subject. His Native American stuff and his shaman songs dated back to his high-school writing. He was doing that long before Carlos Castaneda became popular. Medicine men were his obsession. He wasn't just trying to be far out. He didn't have to try, cos he already was."

The Soft Parade was more than eight minutes of Catholicism, a non-believing demi-god and a non-stop anthropological cast. There were pretty neat touches. The 'soft parade' itself was Morrison's description of the Chicano kids who dragged their low riders through LA strips on hot summer nights, showing off their ritualistic skills to adoring girls. The cobra and leopard he mentioned were the elaborately painted creatures on the hot-rod bonnets. Part of the music was recycled from a Ford Motor Company training film that The Doors provided instrumental soundtrack to in June '66, namely the transitional verse *'Catacombs, nursery bones…'* Despite the bizarre mad-men nature of the film, called *Love Thy Customer*, it served The Doors well. They used other parts of this pre-Elektra endeavour on *Light My Fire, Spanish Caravan, Celebration Of The Lizard* and *Love Street*.

Years later, Botnick and Rothchild reviewed the album. Rothchild, the producer: "We thought: 'Let's take The Doors' music to a logical extreme – a full band sound – so that we've got a place to go from that.' We created the furthest swing of the

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The Doors on *Parade*: (l-r) Jim Morrison, John Densmore, Ray Manzarek, Robby Krieger.

ALAMY

pendulum so that the fans could be relieved that we'd come back. It sounds calculated, and it was, but it was a way to keep it interesting.

"We'd say: 'Okay, this song needs horns.' So we'd call in an arranger [Paul Harris], saying on this part it should do something like this here and something like that there, just rough sketches. The arranger would go away and write a chart. When we'd come back and do the session, it would always be wrong, and so we'd rearrange it on the floor. That was primarily Robby and Ray, with a little help from me."

The now-title track was recorded in cut-ups. Botnick: "Those were recorded independently of one another. We assembled them as we went along. We used stereo mic'ing all over this album. I'd say *The Soft Parade* was the first rock'n'roll or popular music album to use stereo microphones."

Morrison's ending to *Parade*'s vocals involved a five-way pan. Rothchild: "What was amazing was that he didn't listen to any of those other vocals as he was recording. He was an unbelievable syncher."

"Did Jim think he was a shaman? Probably not, but he was genuinely read up on the subject."

Robby Krieger

As for the cover, Elektra wimped out. Rather than use a contemporary band photo, because Morrison was both puffier and bearded and Miami-mauled, they exhumed a two-year-old photo of The Doors taken by Joel Brodsky, a long shot with the band posed round his camera tripod. Inside was a surreal painting of the group by Peter Schaumann. The back cover told the detail and introduced the silver metal version of the group's logo.

The album was released on July 18, 1969, to very mixed reviews, some bad, some really bad.

Robby: "So harsh I tried to forget them. Once you have a sound, and you change that, people hate you. But we didn't ever let that deter us. In any case, we never played a song the same way twice."

The new *The Soft Parade: 50th Anniversary Deluxe Edition* includes the relevant songs without orchestra, for comparison. "I like both versions," Robby says. "I think the album is as good as anything else we've ever done."

Last word to Jim: "This is the trip, the best part… Pretty good, huh?! Yeah, I'm proud to be part of this number."

Next stop for The Doors: *Morrison Hotel*. Book in, and place your bets. It's going to be another bumpy ride.

RIDING OUT
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HENRY DILTZ/GETTY

THE STORM
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COCKTAILS

With Jim Morrison in the grip of alcoholism and at times barely able to perform live, facing a possible 13 years in jail, on a downward spiral and threatening to take the rest of **The Doors** with him, it was decided that the best thing to do was get back in the studio. Against the odds, they came out with one of their greatest albums: *Morrison Hotel*.

Words: **Mick Wall**

The end of the 1960s found The Doors – one of the dark-star American groups who had exemplified the freewheeling spirit of that groundbreaking yet troubled decade – teetering on the abyss. With Jim Morrison increasingly becoming the victim of his own hype – drunk and out of control most of the time, a danger to himself and others – the rest of the band feared for their own futures.

"The boys did not hate Jim," insists former Doors tour manager Vince Treanor. "The boys did not dislike Jim. The boys wanted Jim to be part of the group, but they couldn't take the trouble that Jim was causing. They couldn't take the loss of [so many] performances as a result of his behaviour. They couldn't take the loss of all the record sales. They couldn't deal with the loss of radio time. The censure that went down, the newspaper articles, the pastors and the righteous ministers with their boyfriends in the closet that got up and were saying how terrible The Doors was and how perverted Morrison was. The whole thing. They didn't want to deal with that kind of bad, negative, horrible publicity."

And yet, in the drawn-out aftermath of the arrest of Doors frontman Morrison after he allegedly pulled out his penis on stage at a concert in Miami in April 1969, 'bad, negative, horrible publicity' followed The Doors around like a cloud of flies.

The release later that year of The Doors album *The Soft Parade*, an overindulgent confection of lyrical navel gazing and musical self-importance, had not helped the band's sagging reputation. Jim Morrison was now a bearded and bloated parody of the lit-up boho poet he still saw himself as, while keyboard player Ray Manzarek, guitarist Robby Krieger and drummer John Densmore were way past long-suffering, and now deep into despair about their rapidly shrinking career prospects. Suddenly everything about The Doors was a drag, man.

'In the drawn-out aftermath of the arrest of Jim Morrison, 'bad, negative, horrible publicity' followed The Doors around like a cloud of flies.'

"As Jim got more out of control – the roomful of gunpowder waiting for somebody to light a match – Ray became more alienated and isolated from him," Treanor says. "Now Ray never disowned Jim, but he never did what we all should have done, which was to say: 'Look, asshole, smarten up, you're wrecking everything!'"

Treanor recalls how Morrison once told him: "People wanna see me drunk on stage". "I said: 'Nobody wants to see you do that. They want to see a Doors performance. They do not want see you lumbering around the stage drunk, forgetting your words and putting on a show where you stand there babbling nonsense. Put on a Doors show, sing Doors music, stop the nonsense, because it's only gonna hurt!'"

Indeed, as 1969 ended the hurt seemed to be coming down on everyone. America was still waging war in Southeast Asia. Britain was still crumbling, while Europe remained aloof. In rock, the dream as personified by Woodstock in August – an event from which The Doors were pointedly absent because, according to their manager Bill Siddons now, "they exclusively headlined and did not want to be one of many", but which Robby Krieger once explained away as being because they thought it would be a "second-class repeat of the

Checking in, or checking out? From the photo shoot for the cover of *Morrison Hotel*.

1970 TIMELINE

Words: **Henry Yates**

JANUARY 4

KEITH MOON ACCIDENTALLY KILLS HIS CHAUFFEUR

The looning takes on a darker tone when the wildman Who drummer runs down his chauffeur while escaping a drunken mob surrounding his Bentley outside a Hertfordshire pub. Neil Boland's death is ruled an accident, but the episode haunts the drummer for the final eight years of his life. "Nobody actually pointed a finger at him and said: 'You killed your best friend'," said Pete Townshend. "But that was the thing that went through his head."

"Nobody actually pointed a finger at him and said: 'You killed your best friend.'"

JANUARY 16

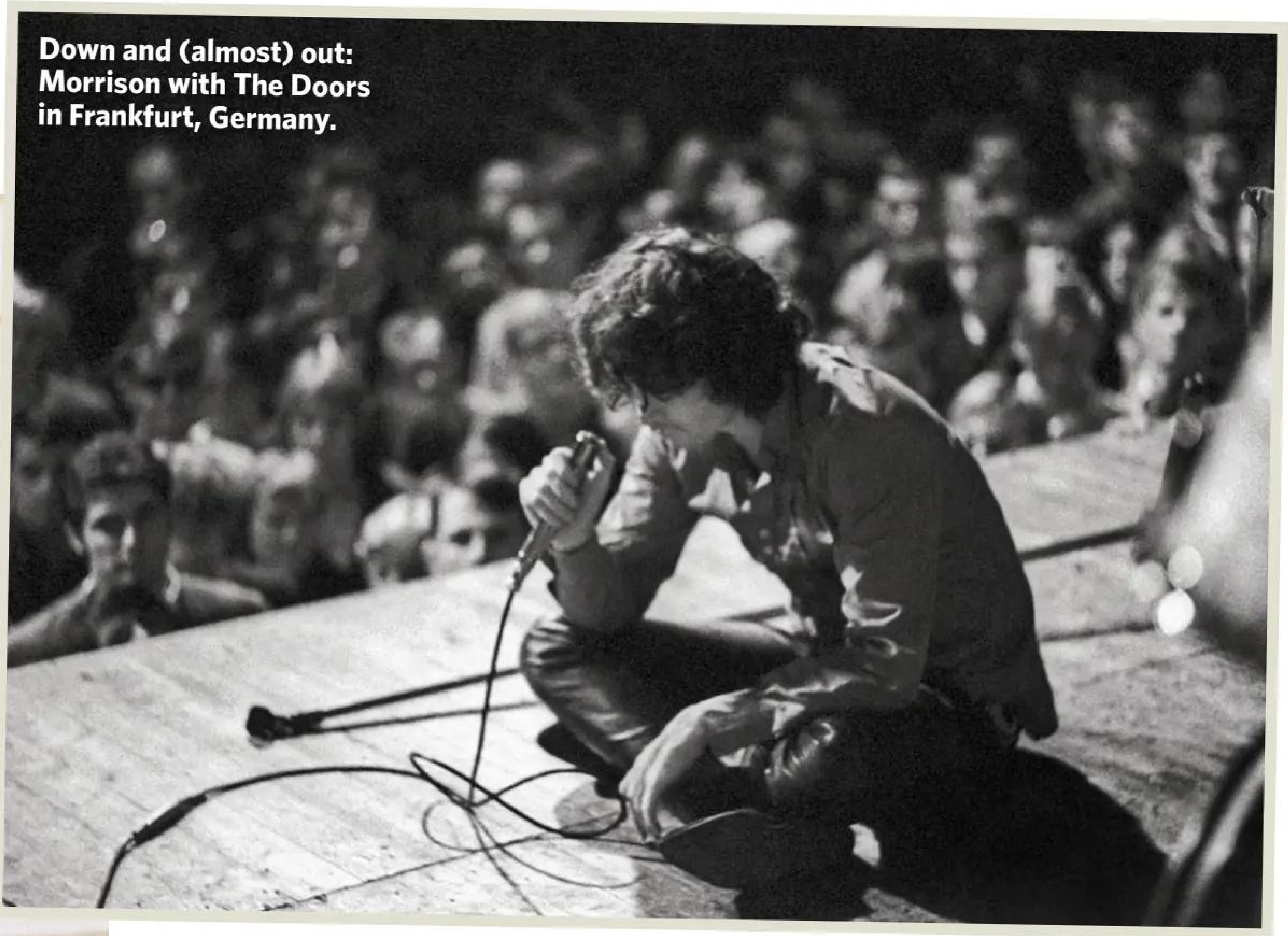
JOHN LENNON'S "SICK" ART EXHIBITION IS SHUT DOWN

Police raid John Lennon's Bag One

KEITH MOON & NEIL BOLAND: GETTY

1246
MORRISON
HOTEL

MAIN: HENRY DILTZ/GETTY; INSET: GETTY



Down and (almost) out: Morrison with The Doors in Frankfurt, Germany.

"[The rest of the band] wanted Jim to be part of the group, but they couldn't take the trouble that Jim was causing."

Former Doors tour manager Vince Treanor

previous year's Monterey Pop Festival", a decision they came to regret – had turned into the nightmare of the Rolling Stones' free outdoor show at Altamont Racetrack in December, where 18-year-old Meredith Hunter was stabbed and clubbed to death by Hells Angels.

In the same period, the Charles Manson murders and subsequent arrests had transformed LA from fun-loving and free into a city of paranoia. People – affluent music and movie people especially – now carried guns in their cars. With cocaine and heroin replacing weed and acid as the drugs du jour, the new 'heavy manners' under which America in general and LA in particular operated made Morrison's antics before and after Miami seem suddenly, weirdly in tune with the times. As he sang on a new thing he'd written: '*Blood on the streets of fantastic LA*…'

Such was the backdrop to the recording of the fifth Doors album, originally titled Hard Rock Café, before being changed to the more enigmatic *Morrison Hotel* (Side One would still be billed on the sleeve as Hard Rock Café, Side Two as Morrison Hotel). The story of which really began when Elektra Records founder Jac Holzman stepped in with a plan to rehabilitate the public image of The Doors.

"It was not over before Miami, but it could have been over after Miami," Holzman tells me now. "John [Densmore] was disgusted. They didn't know what to do. They were being blacklisted in large auditoria around the country, and they said: 'What are we gonna do?' I said: 'Time to make another record. Go into the studio. Work out your demons in the studio.' And *Morrison Hotel* came out of that. Not the easiest record, but it was stuff that Jim was comfortable with and there was some really fabulous material. So that was ▷

exhibition at the London Arts Gallery, after being told by a local magistrate that the exhibition includes nude sketches depicting the Beatle and new wife Yoko Ono on honeymoon.

"Many toilet walls depict works of similar merit," notes Detective Inspector Frederick Luff. "It is perhaps charitable to suggest that they are the work of a sick mind."

JANUARY 23

PINK FLOYD RISE, SYD BARRETT FALLS

In the same month that estranged Floyd frontman Syd Barrett crawls to UK No.40 with his debut solo album *The Madcap Laughs*, his former bandmates perform their forthcoming and future-sound-defining album *Atom Heart Mother* at the Theatre Des Champs Élysées in Paris (billed as The Amazing Pudding).

> "It was packed to the rafters and then some. I heard there were a thousand fans on the roof."

FEBRUARY 14

THE WHO RECORD *LIVE AT LEEDS*

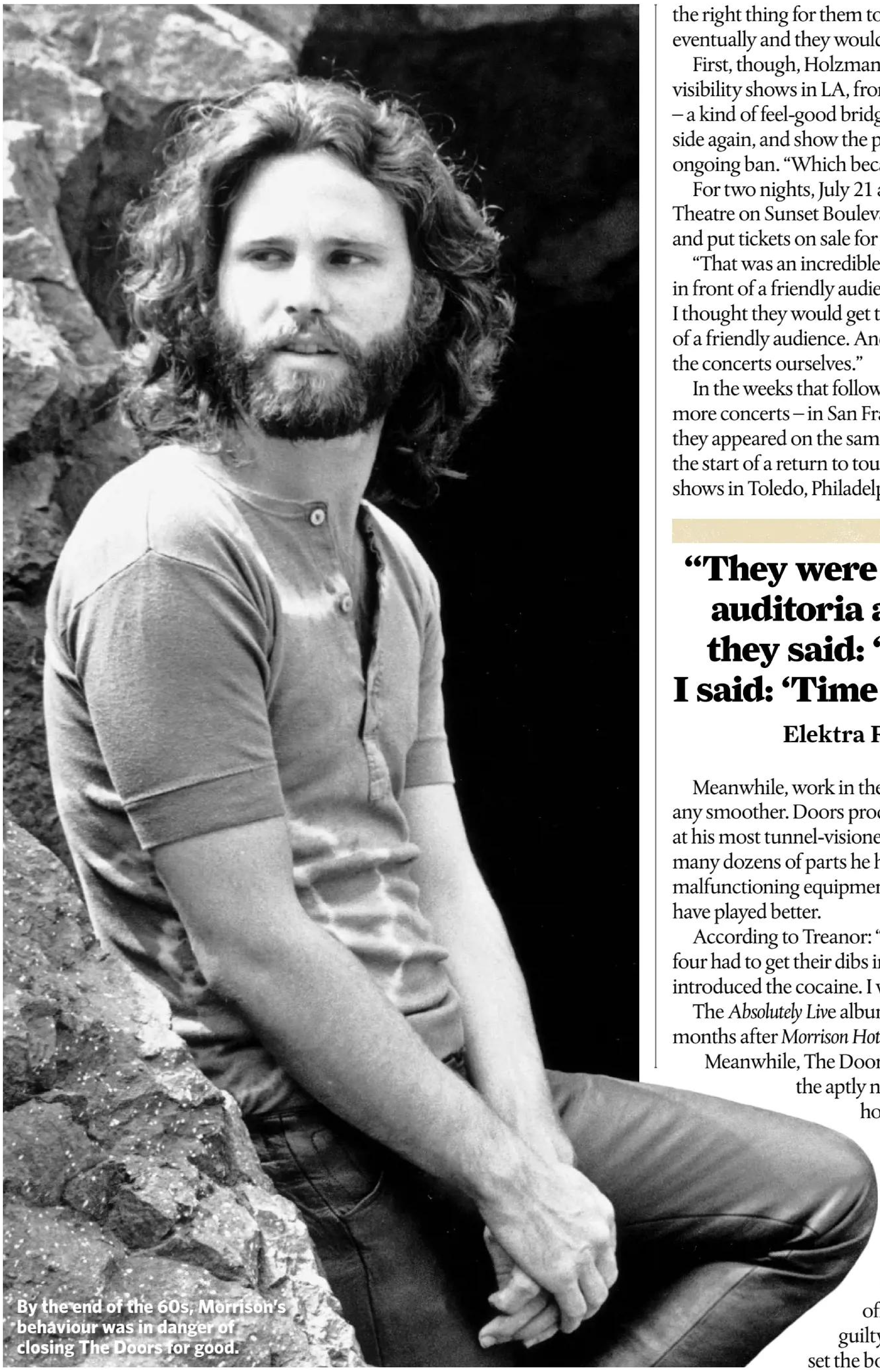
Winding down the *Tommy* world tour, The Who record a career-best show in the university's student refectory (Roger Daltrey: "It was packed to the rafters and then some. I heard there were a thousand fans on the roof"). On a good day for seminal live albums, the Grateful Dead also record *Dick's Picks Volume Four* at the Fillmore East.

THE WHO LIVE AT LEEDS

FEBRUARY 22

DAVID BOWIE RAIDS THE DRESSING-UP BOX

Looking to shake off *Space Oddity*, and flood the scene's "denim hell" with colour, David Bowie's new band The Hype debut at London's Roundhouse. The line-up – Bowie, guitarist Mick Ronson, drummer John Cambridge and producer Tony Visconti on bass – adopt superhero personas and costumes,



By the end of the 60s, Morrison's behaviour was in danger of closing The Doors for good.

GETTY

the right thing for them to do, because I knew [Miami] was gonna blow over eventually and they would go out on the [road] again."

First, though, Holzman suggested, they should play two special high-visibility shows in LA, from which they would extrapolate a live album – a kind of feel-good bridging exercise to get the people and the press back on side again, and show the promoters what they'd been missing during the still ongoing ban. "Which became the backbones of *Absolutely Live*."

For two nights, July 21 and 22, The Doors would take over the Aquarius Theatre on Sunset Boulevard, where the stage musical *Hair* was then playing, and put tickets on sale for just two dollars a pop.

"That was an incredible performance," says Holzman. "See, I wanted them in front of a friendly audience again. Because they had been really shaken, and I thought they would get their sea legs back more quickly if they were in front of a friendly audience. And the only way I could guarantee that was to produce the concerts ourselves."

In the weeks that followed the Aquarius shows, the band got to play three more concerts – in San Francisco, in Eugene, Oregon, and Seattle Pop – where they appeared on the same bill as Led Zeppelin. But any hopes of this being the start of a return to touring in the US were quickly dashed when projected shows in Toledo, Philadelphia, San Diego and New York were 'rescheduled'.

> **"They were being blacklisted in large auditoria around the country, and they said: 'What are we gonna do?' I said: 'Time to make another record.'"**
>
> **Elektra Records founder Jac Holzman**

Meanwhile, work in the studio on the projected live album wasn't going any smoother. Doors producer Paul Rothchild, now heavily into cocaine and at his most tunnel-visioned, was insisting the group come in and overdub the many dozens of parts he had identified as inadequate, either because of malfunctioning equipment or simply because he thought the band should have played better.

According to Treanor: "Everybody was a victim. It wasn't one of them, all four had to get their dibs in there. But it was during that session that Paul introduced the cocaine. I was appalled. I got out of there…"

The *Absolutely Live* album was eventually released almost a year later, several months after *Morrison Hotel*, and in completely revamped form.

Meanwhile, The Doors played their final show of 1969 on November 1 at the aptly named Ice Palace in Las Vegas, a large, anonymous hockey arena in Nevada, where the audience had little or no interest in hearing anything from *The Soft Parade* and only really came alive when drummer Densmore cracked open the start of *Light My Fire*.

Morrison, though, sleepwalked through the show. A week later he was obliged to turn himself in to the Dade Count Public Safety Dept in Miami, where he was officially arrested, gave The Doors' office in LA as his home address and entered a not-guilty plea. The presiding judge, Judge Murray Goodman, set the bond at $5,000 and 20 minutes later Morrison was free

but Bowie is crushed by the early reaction. "We thought we were kind of smart," he said, "but nobody even looked at the stage."

FEBRUARY 28

LED ZEPPELIN'S BALLOON IS BURST

For one night only, Led Zeppelin are billed as The Nobs in Copenhagen, after Danish heiress Eva Von Zeppelin – already enraged by the flaming airship depicted on the debut album's sleeve – threatens legal action if the band use her family name on home turf. Jimmy Page shrugs off the incident as "absurd", but John Bonham is keen to continue with the name: "Just think what our album covers could have looked like!"

MARCH 19

DAVID BOWIE MARRIES ANGIE

The low-key ceremony at Bromley Registry Office is chiefly to secure Cyprus-born Mary Angela Barnett a work permit, and has not a sniff of romance. "David had told me before we married: 'I don't love you,'" the actress and model said, "and we had enjoyed an open relationship from the start. We had a threesome on the night before our wedding." For his own part, Bowie will later describe their coupling as "like living with a blowtorch".

> "We had a threesome on the night before our wedding."

APRIL 10

PAUL McCARTNEY BREAKS UP THE BEATLES

John Lennon and George Harrison have previously quit – and rejoined – before Macca's self-penned Q&A to promote his first solo album cites the band's "personal differences, business differences, musical differences… I have a better time with my family." Although he never explicitly called time on the band, the *Daily Mirror* swiftly whips up a story that becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy ("Paul Quits

DAVID BOWIE & ANGIE BOWIE: GETTY

"Come on, baby, light my fire…" The Doors and an impromptu fifth member.

HENRY DILTZ/GETTY

to go – on condition that he return for the start of his obscenity trial, now set for April 27, 1970.

Although advised by his lawyer, Max Fink, to keep a low profile, two days later Morrison was in trouble with the law again, during a Continental Airlines flight from LA to Phoenix to see the Rolling Stones in concert. His crime this time: getting drunk and out of control and harassing airline staff and other passengers. Both Morrison and his travel companion, Tom Baker, were arrested by US Marshalls as soon as they stepped off the plane at Sky Harbour International Airport, and charged with the federal offences of 'assault, intimidation, threatening a flight attendant, interfering with the flight of an intercontinental aircraft and public drunkenness'. When a knife was then found on Baker, the pair were taken straight to city jail where, they spent the night.

> **"[*Morrison Hotel*] was a concentrated effort to get away from *The Soft Parade* and back to the root."**
>
> **Engineer Bruce Botnick**

According to Baker, speaking years later, "Jim handed me a bottle of whisky and waved a fistful of choice front-row tickets around. He planned to stand outside the auditorium [where the Stones were playing] and randomly hand them out to young fans who couldn't afford a ticket, saying: 'This is courtesy of your old pal Jim Morrison. Enjoy the show.' He felt this would be a good-natured and harmless way to upstage Jagger and company."

The following morning, Max Fink flew into town, where he arranged with Bill Siddons, also in town for the Stones show, for Morrison and Baker to be bailed on $5,000, with an arraignment set for November 24. Driving back to the airport with Fink and Siddons, Morrison was told that if convicted, the charges held a $10,000 fine and a possible 10-year jail sentence.

The next day, Morrison was back in the studio recording material for the next Doors album.

The big idea was the same as everyone else's in late 1969: to get The Doors 'back to the garden'. That is, far away from the manicured musical cathedral of *The Soft Parade*, and back to their earthy blues roots.

Two months earlier, the second album from The Band – the roots-rock revivalists who had earned their spurs backing Bob Dylan through his last significant tours in 1966 – had been released and now sat at No.2 in the US chart. The most frequently played 'rock' record on the radio was their single ▷

The Beatles"). "I think it was the press who misunderstood," McCartney reflected in *Anthology.*

PETER GREEN: GETTY

APRIL 11

PETER GREEN GOES OFF THE RAILS

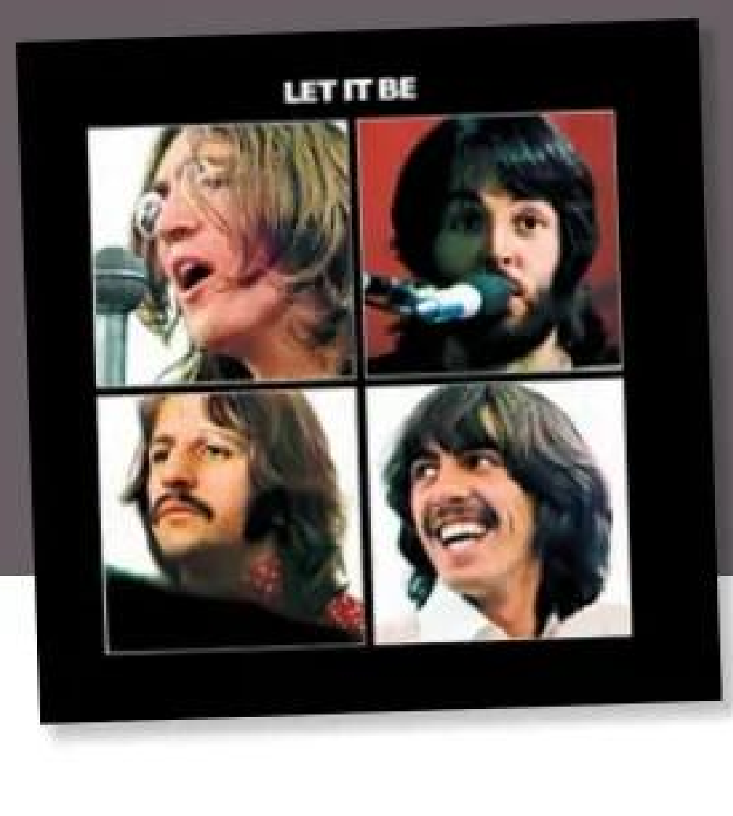
Having told *NME* in February that he plans to give away all his earnings, Fleetwood Mac's troubled leader is easy prey for a Munich hippie cult when the band are playing in Germany, and the fallout from his acid trip at their local commune effectively ends his time in the band he started (although he plays on until May in order to avoid breach of contract). "We called them the German jet set," recalled Mac drummer Mick Fleetwood. "They captured Peter completely and pulled him away. He was already set to leave, pretty much. But my god, this was like the final nail in the coffin."

> **"They captured Peter completely and pulled him away. He was already set to leave."**

MAY 8

THE BEATLES ALBUM *LET IT BE* IS RELEASED

The uneven product of ill-tempered sessions, The Beatles' swansong release tops the UK chart, but press response is brutal. Leading the catcalls, *NME*'s Alan Smith hisses that "if the new Beatles soundtrack is to be their last then it will stand as a cheapskate epitaph, a cardboard tombstone, a sad and tatty end to a musical fusion which wiped clean and drew again the face of pop".



JUNE 3

THE KINKS' RAY DAVIES LEAVES HIS CARBON FOOTPRINT

Hearing a tip-off that British radio stations intend to ban the Kinks' make-or-break single *Lola* due to the mention of 'Coca-Cola' (the BBC on the grounds of product

HAPPY NEW YEAR
300

'I woke up this morning, got myself a beer…' **A bar was not the best place to be for Morrison in early 1970.**

Up On Cripple Creek. The Beatles, having ditched the orchestrated super-pop of *Sergeant Pepper* in favour of a return to their roots with the more grounded rock of *Abbey Road*, released in the US in October 1969, and preceded by the pointedly retro single *Get Back*, also appeared to be signalling the way back to a more 'real' musical state of mind. Meanwhile, Dylan retreated so far back into the history of rock that he'd ended up releasing an album so square – *Nashville Skyline* – that critics found it hard to believe he wasn't putting them on.

The Doors, though, had a more pressing need for a return to simpler, less bombastic music than that which Paul Rothchild had coerced them into on *The Soft Parade*. Simple blues and balls-out rock was all Morrison could manage now. He simply didn't have the attention span – or the voice – any more for anything more sophisticated or time consuming. Nevertheless, the sessions were uphill all the way, engineer Bruce Botnick recalls.

'What they eventually came out of the studio with was, paradoxically, the most 'up'-sounding Doors album of them all.'

"Some of it was real tough, yeah" he says. "That was a concentrated effort to get away from *Soft Parade* and back to the roots. But even then that was a struggle… Many was a time when Ray, in particular, would go into Jim's poetry book, see something interesting, do some editing, and sit with the other two guys and they'd come up with an arrangement. Jim might have a smattering of a melody… I mean, it still kept going, but it just wasn't that block of creativity from Jim."

Paul Rothchild, meanwhile, might have been ready to accept that the experimentation of *The Soft Parade* had not proved a hit, but he deeply resented having to try to work with a Jim Morrison who had always been a loose cannon in the studio, but in the past had also at least been able to come up with songs, lyrics and melodies, and to sing them well. Now he was simply a dishevelled drunk, as far as Rothchild could tell.

It was getting to the point where he couldn't stand to be in the same room as Morrison any more. Rothchild had "grown tired of dragging The Doors from one album to another, especially an unwilling Jim, and he had virtually dried up. Two out of three times, Jim would either not want to work or would go into the studio drunk. He would intentionally disrupt things – never fruitfully. Most of my energies were spent trying to co-ordinate Jim with the group."

Doors manager Bill Siddons recalled one session where Morrison came to rehearsals and drank 36 beers. Ray Manzarek would confess: "The situation was dire." He and the rest of the band had come to realise at last that "Jim was an alcoholic". Manzarek tried to qualify it by pointing out that, as far as he knew, "a genetic predisposition to alcoholism ran in his family. It was hard to tell him to clean up his act".

Nevertheless, attempts were made. One afternoon during the *Morrison Hotel* sessions, Manzarek, John Densmore and Robby Krieger drove Jim over to

HENRY DILTZ/GETTY

placement, other stations for its supposed drugs reference), the bandleader makes the round trip from New York to London – and back – just to change the lyric to the less contentious 'cherry cola'.

JUNE 27-29

BATH FESTIVAL OF BLUES AND PROGRESSIVE MUSIC

Promoter Freddy Bannister pulls off what might be the best pound-for-pound festival bill in history, with the Royal Bath And West Showground hosting Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin, Santana, The Byrds, Jefferson Airplane, Johnny Winter, John Mayall with Peter Green, Canned Heat and many more (with Genesis, Yes and Hawkwind playing unofficially in an adjoining field).

JULY 3-5

ATLANTA INTERNATIONAL POP FESTIVAL

Not to be outdone, the Americans hit back with the 'southern Woodstock', featuring the Allman Brothers Band, BB King, Mott The Hoople and, most of all, Jimi Hendrix, his status as a black headliner in the cradle of the civil rights movement not to be sniffed at, and his set signposting a musical future that – spoiler alert – would never happen. "By the time Jimi got to Atlanta, there was a new confidence in him," says producer Eddie Kramer. "He was ready to break through to the next stage."

"By the time Jimi got to Atlanta, there was a new confidence in him."

AUGUST 3

MICK CHEATS ON KEITH IN THE FILM *PERFORMANCE*

Critics of the time skewer the violence and squalor of Donald Cammell and Nicolas Roeg's "pretentious and repellent little film", loosely based on a co-habiting gangster (James Fox) and a faded rock star (Mick Jagger). Although Anita Pallenberg is Keith Richards's girlfriend,

BATH FESTIVAL: GETTY

“Jim’s attitude was always: ‘Look out, man, I’m hell-bent on destruction.’ We couldn’t moralise.”

Ray Manzarek

Krieger’s father’s house and sat him by the pool for “a chat”. According to Manzarek: “We told him: ‘This is seriously affecting us all now as a group, and you physically.’ Jim says: ‘I know. I drink too much and I’m trying to quit.’ Which was a rare admission. We told him we’d help. Jim said: ‘Thanks. Now let’s go get some lunch at the Lucky-U. I want some funky Mexican food and a drink.’ That was Morrison. The romantic poet who wrote *‘I woke up this morning, got myself a beer’*. A real ‘fuck you!’ line. Unfortunately that was the reality. Jim’s attitude was always: ‘Look out, man, I’m hell-bent on destruction.’ We couldn’t moralise. We figured he might emerge from the spiral. But working with Jim in the studio was the only way we knew how to transcend his problem.”

What they eventually came out of the studio with was, paradoxically, the most ‘up’-sounding Doors album of them all. Opening with *Roadhouse Blues,* featuring the wailing harmonica of an uncredited John Sebastian and the ass-tight bass of veteran rockabilly star Lonnie Mack, here was Morrison and the band opening up to where they were at in a way that is both fun and faintly disturbing. It would become the band’s new show opener and road anthem throughout the coming months as The Doors returned fitfully to full-time concert commitments.

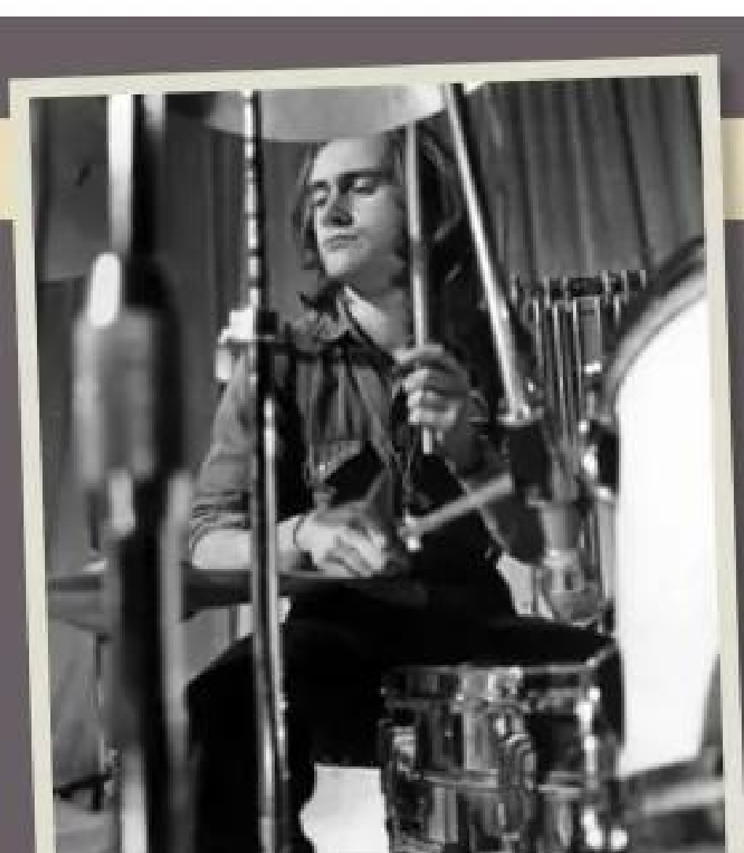
Other new tracks worth the wait included *Peace Frog*, a funky hunk of LA shimmy that found Krieger punching out one of his most memorable riffs as Morrison scatted wildly about *‘Blood on the streets…’* of New Haven, of Chicago, on a river of sadness, and of fantastic LA, the lyrics for which Paul Rothchild found in one of the notebooks Morrison had left lying around the studio – while he disappeared to the nearby bar the Phone Booth for drinks – in a rough poem headed *Abortion Stories*.

Other highlights were *Blue Sunday*, a tremulous love song to Morrison’s long-time lover Pamela Courson, or maybe Judy Huddleston, or maybe Eve Babitz, or maybe that chick he’d fucked the other night at the Whisky A Go Go. It didn’t matter, the song was tender and sweet. Then there was *Queen Of The Highway*, one of the last truly great Morrison/Krieger numbers: electric jazz piano, snake-hipped guitar, rain-spattered percussion, and Jim’s voice, honeyed again, suddenly, his lyrics exquisite. It showed just what The Doors were still capable of, where they might yet go, if only they could keep their singer from setting himself on fire.

Others were repurposed or older tracks, the most lovely, *Indian Summer*, a moment of quiet transcendence constructed from the dying embers of *The End*, as if Morrison had chosen to love his brothers and sisters instead of killing his father and fucking his mother; *Waiting For The Sun*, ▷

HENRY DILTZ/GETTY

the explicit sex scenes between her and Jagger are rumoured to be real. “Cammell wanted to fuck me up, because he [Jagger] had been with Anita before,” Keith will write decades later in his autobiography, *Life*. “Clearly, he took a delight in the idea that he was screwing things up between us.”



AUGUST
PHIL COLLINS JOINS GENESIS

After answering a *Melody Maker* small-ad requesting a drummer “sensitive to acoustic music”, Collins arrives at Peter Gabriel’s sprawling family pile in Surrey, and immediately lowers the tone by jumping into the swimming pool “in just my greying Y-fronts”. Despite the class divide, the drummer impresses. “These are tightly wound public schoolboys. They will, they say gravely, ‘let me know’. I later learn that Peter knew the moment I sat down that I was the guy.”

> ‘Phil Collins jumps into Peter Gabriel’s swimming pool “in just my greying Y-fronts”.’

AUGUST 14
STEPHEN STILLS IS ARRESTED

Having been found crawling along the corridor of a San Diego motel, the guitarist is incoherent, aggressive with police officers and in possession of cocaine and barbiturates. At the resulting court appearance, his $1,000 fine is reduced to a ‘misdemeanour’, and David Crosby’s status as CSN’s troublemaker-in-chief continues unchallenged.

PHIL COLLINS + STEPHEN STILLS: GETTY

AUGUST 23
LOU REED TRIES THE NINE-TO-FIVE

After his final show with the Velvet Underground, in New York, Reed is collected by his parents from Max’s Kansas City and returns to the family

revisited from the original 1968 sessions, now dated yet still moving enough to hold sway on an album rippling with new hope. Others still were wonderfully wrought facsimiles of great tunes The Doors might have come up with all on their own had they the collective willpower left to still accomplish such feats, but were cut and shut together with great skill by Paul Rothchild, whose raging perfectionism was nevertheless once again driving them all slowly mad.

There were also lowlights: *Land Ho!*, another dated-sounding, 'ironic' take on the traditional sea shanty, which fills up four minutes of the listener's life that they would never get back; *Ship Of Fools*, yet another variant on the riff to *Break On Through (To The Others Side)*, which could, equally, have turned up on either of the first two Doors albums.

Another gem was *The Spy*, its title and subject matter 'borrowed' by Morrison from Anaï Nin's novel *A Spy In The House*, in which the heroine, Sabina, plays deliberately dangerous games of desire, intoxicated by the principle of pleasure for its own sake. Morrison knowingly croons about *'your deepest, secret fears'* on what is one of the most truly autobiographical songs on the album

Outside the studio, however, time was now running out for Morrison and The Doors. When he and Baker failed to turn up for their scheduled court appearance in Phoenix on November 24, and instead sent Max Fink to register their joint not-guilty plea, Judge William Copple went ahead and set the trial date for February 17, 1970, in the US District Court in Phoenix. With the Miami trial date set for just two months after that, Morrison was looking at a potential joint jail time of more than 13 years.

Nevertheless, he blithely carried on. When Henry Diltz shot the photographs that would be used on the cover of *Morrison Hotel*, he at least had a for-once clean-shaven Morrison to try to make look pretty.

'Quality of their shows varied so much that the band could go from world-conquering giants to teetering on the brink of self-destruction.'

They had actually found a real-life Morrison Hotel, in the skid-row section of downtown LA (at 1246 Hope Street, to be precise) to go with the real-life Hard Rock Café at 300 East 5th Street, and Diltz photographed the band at both locations, going guerrilla to get some shots when the owner of the actual Morrison Hotel refused permission for them to shoot inside, getting the band to pose hurriedly when the manager's back was turned.

In fact the real reason why Morrison had taken to shaving again – albeit temporarily – was because Max Fink had talked him into it, in order that he look the part of the successful, clean-cut young musician when the trial in Phoenix came up in February. That strategy that went disastrously wrong when clean-shaven Morrison turned up in court with Tom Baker – who had recently grown a full-length beard – and the flight attendant got the two mixed up, with the result that Morrison was the one found guilty of all charges, rather than Baker who had been the real perpetrator. It took several weeks for Fink to persuade the court of the mistaken identity, during which Morrison and Baker fell out after Baker refused to stand up and admit the truth to the court.

It all came to a predictably drunken head during a party at Elektra Records celebrating the opening of a new office in West Hollywood, when Baker accused Morrison of being a hypocrite for "financing the very authority you claim interest in overthrowing". Morrison's response was to shove Baker over a desk and proceed to start smashing up the new office. He was eventually bundled into the back of a limo, the driver being shouted at to "Get him the hell away from here!"

By the time *Morrison Hotel* was released, in February 1970 – and to their best reviews since their first album three years before – The Doors had announced their arrival back on to the American concert stage with four shows over two sold-out nights at the Felt Forum in New York, a 4,000-capacity adjunct to Madison Square Garden, chosen because of its resemblance to the more intimate feel of the Aquarius Theatre in LA. These shows would again be taped by Rothchild, still searching for the perfect Doors performances for their projected live album.

home in Long Island. He will spend the next two years working as a typist at his father's accountancy firm, on a weekly wage of $40.

AUGUST 26

DUANE ALLMAN DUETS WITH ERIC CLAPTON

With a newly solo Clapton recording at Miami's Criteria Studios, the doomed god of southern slide guitar drops in to play on *Layla*'s weeping twin-lead outro. "I tried to get Duane to leave the Allmans," Clapton reflects. "But he said he had to be loyal to what he called 'the family'."

SEPTEMBER 18

JIMI HENDRIX KISSES THE SKY

Throughout the year, the guitarist has given hints at his darkening head-space, making doomy statements from the stage ("I've been dead a long time"), walking off mid-set and abusing audiences in Seattle. Now, after leaving a tragic message on his former manager Chas Chandler's answering machine ("I need help bad, man"), Hendrix is pronounced dead on arrival at St. Mary Abbot's Hospital in London. Whether you believe the pathologist's official verdict (inhalation of vomit due to barbiturate intoxication) or the murder allegations of roadie James 'Tappy' Wright, the greatest guitarist of the era is gone.

"Well first of all, Jim did not pull it out… But it was bedlam, just total craziness."

SEPTEMBER 20

MIAMI CATCHES UP WITH JIM MORRISON

In a litigious year for live performance – Janis Joplin and Jefferson Airplane have already been fined $200 and $1,000 respectively for on-stage profanity – the Doors frontman is charged with indecent exposure and profanity at the previous year's infamous show the band played in

JIMI HENDRIX: GETTY

After the trials and tribulations, it's hardly surprising that The Doors were happy with how the *Morrison Hotel* album turned out.

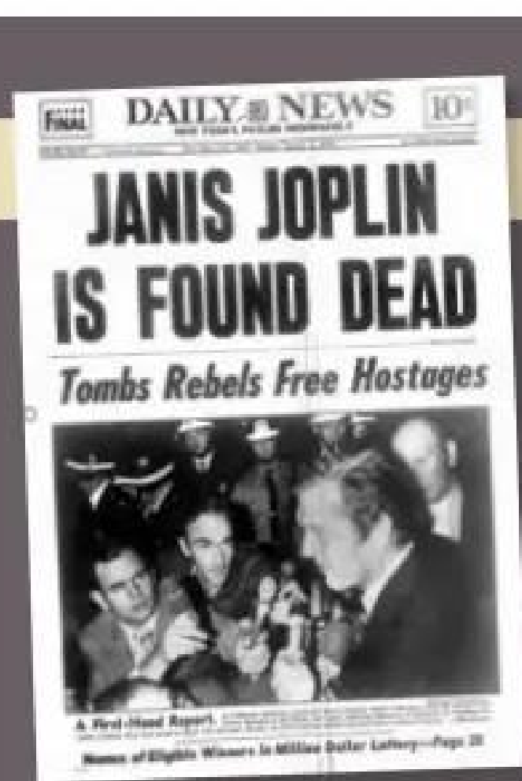
HENRY DILTZ/GETTY

Billed as the Roadhouse Blues tour – a shrewd move designed to signal the new, bolder, hard-assed direction The Doors were now moving in – the Felt Forum shows were seemingly a triumphal return to form. At least while the party mood lasted. Which for Morrison was never quite long enough any more.

He now travelled with his own entourage, separate from the rest of the band, and when his mood altered from set to set no one was sure any more what the cause was, although the other band members could always hazard a pretty accurate guess, depending on just how fucked-up their singer was: on coke he could still be a defiant presence, ready to play for longer than contracted, making with the jokes and the moves, giving it his all, or what was left of it; on booze and downers he would be verging on the incoherent, "just holding on to the mic some nights", Manzarek would later recall.

Reviews of the shows were varied. "Mr Morrison has had trouble before when the police of other cities found his performances variously lewd, lascivious, indecent and profane," began the piece in *The New York Times*. "But by the standards of the Off-Broadway stage, Mr Morrison's performance is fairly tame. Saturday he kept his clothes on and made no gestures that could offend." The *Village Voice*, however, early adopters of the Morrison mystique, went for the kill, describing an off-stage sighting of Morrison a few nights later at a John Sebastian gig at the Bitter End club as "a shadow of himself, with his face grown chubby, his body showing flab, his once shoulder-length hair receding into his forehead".

There were six more Roadhouse Blues shows in February, all around the release of *Morrison Hotel*, which was much better-received than its two ⊳



DAILY NEWS 10¢

JANIS JOPLIN IS FOUND DEAD

Tombs Rebels Free Hostages

DAILY NEWS: GETTY

Miami (although not the charge of 'lewd and lascivious behaviour'). "Well first of all, Jim did not pull it out [in Miami]," says Doors guitarist Robby Krieger. "But it was bedlam, just total craziness."

OCTOBER 4

JANIS JOPLIN CHECKS OUT

The track-marked, troubled singer is found dead at Hollywood's Landmark Hotel, on the same day that she is due to record the vocal for the track *Buried Alive In The Blues*. It was assumed to be a heroin overdose, but close friend Peggy Caserta will offer the theory in her 2018 memoir that Joplin went out to the hotel lobby to buy cigarettes, then on her return tripped and fell, breaking her nose which resulted in her dying of asphyxiation. "The truth is that she didn't overdose. I will go to my grave believing that."

> "The truth is that Janis didn't overdose. I will go to my grave believing that."

OCTOBER 10

BLACK SABBATH'S *PARANOID* ALBUM HITS UK NO.1

Heavy metal is officially up and running as Sabbath's second album tops the UK chart (it will be another 43 years before they repeat the feat). But it could all have been very different, Tony Iommi told MusicRadar, had the band's paymasters not sent them back to the studio. "The label suddenly said: 'You don't have enough songs.' Within a few minutes I came up with the riff to *Paranoid*."

BLACK SABBATH
PARANOID

OCTOBER 12

IAN GILLAN FINDS GOD

The Deep Purple frontman sings the title role on the original studio album of Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Jesus Christ Superstar*, but he won't be tempted into appearing in the stage production. "I didn't

MORRISON HOTEL
ROOMS
$2.50

predecessors. *Creem* magazine editor Dave Marsh described it as "the most horrifying rock and roll I have ever heard. When they're good, they're simply unbeatable", while *Circus* announced it as "possibly the best album yet from the Doors… good hard, evil rock". It went gold within three weeks, reaching No.4 in the US, their best chart position for two years. This despite the lack of a recognisable hit single from the album. *You Make Me Real* was issued to American radio, but in an era where singles were becoming increasingly frowned on by 'serious' rock fans, the fact that radio hardly played it, favouring instead deep cuts from the album, such as *Peace Frog* and *Roadhouse Blues*, only made the band prouder. The Doors were hip again, and resisted suggestions that the track *Waiting For The Sun* was a hit waiting to happen.

> **'*Creem* magazine editor Dave Marsh described *Morrison Hotel* as "the most horrifying rock and roll I have ever heard".'**

There were 13 more Doors shows around the United States throughout the spring and early summer of 1970, with Paul Rothchild turning up to record several of them. Quality varied so much that the band could go from world-conquering giants for half a set in Boston, to teetering on the brink of self-destruction again in Baltimore, where Morrison was so drunk that he could barely move his lips.

Even when The Doors were good there were problems. At Cobo Arena in Detroit, on May 8, they played brilliantly for more than four hours – the encore of *The End* lasted almost an hour alone, with Morrison improvising madly – yet found themselves banned from ever playing there again because they had overrun the teamsters' union-set curfew time. Another promoter cancelled a show in Salt Lake City less than 24-hours before show time, after he had attended the previous show in Boston where the promoter had pulled the plug when the band overran and Morrison could be heard to describe them as "cocksuckers".

Somehow, *Morrison Hotel*, the actual and the personal, would not be a place where guests would stay for long. But they would rarely, if ever, forget it. ❼

HENRY DILTZ/GETTY

think about it for more than a half-hour," Gillan told the *Jerusalem Post*. "Here I was, in Deep Purple, the band I always dreamed of playing with. I wasn't going to jeopardise it for a run on the West End or twelve weeks on location filming the movie."

NOVEMBER 9

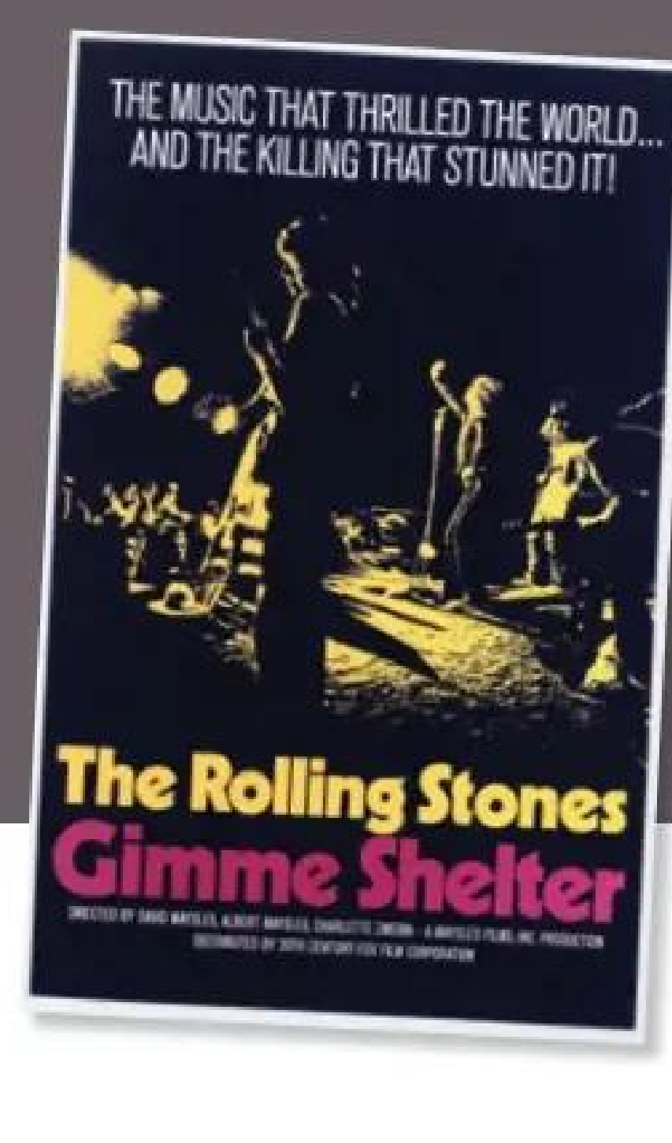
BADFINGER WRITE THE ULTIMATE POWER-BALLAD

Pete Ham and Tom Evans's pain-racked *Without You* is a highlight of Badfinger's *No Dice* album, and will later be covered by Harry Nilsson and Mariah Carey, earning millions. But Ham and Evans will never be rewarded financially for its success, and the wrangling over royalties is thought to be a key factor in their suicides.

DECEMBER 6

***GIMME SHELTER* HITS CINEMAS**

Opening in New York, the Rolling Stones tour documentary is most notable for its candid footage from Altamont. Fallout from the disastrous 1969 concert has followed the band into the new decade; in February they are sued for £375,000 by local residents for causing damage to the land, while on October 26 the mother of murdered teenager Meredith Hunter files a £28,000 law suit.


THE MUSIC THAT THRILLED THE WORLD...
AND THE KILLING THAT STUNNED IT!
The Rolling Stones
Gimme Shelter

> **'The Rolling Stones are sued for £375,000 by local residents.'**

DECEMBER 12

THE LAST DOORS CONCERT WITH JIM MORRISON

Controversial to the last, Morrison's final act on a stage is to smash his mic stand through the floor, bringing to an early close a New Orleans show already marred by forgotten lyrics and meandering anecdotes. The band weigh up their option, and elect to retire from live work. "We couldn't play anywhere, we were fucked because of the Miami incident," Robby Krieger said later.

ALAMY

TINA TURNER – A TRIBUTE
1939 - 2023
CLASSIC ROCK
"They wanted the world..."
QUEEN
THE DIFFICULT DEBUT ALBUM
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THE
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ROCK
INTERVIEW

ROBBY KRIEGER

He might have become a trumpet player. Instead he swapped the horn for guitar, joined The Doors and became part of one of the most influential and legendary bands of the 70s, with whom he wrote enduring classics including *Light My Fire* and wrote his name large in rock history.

Interview: **Mick Wall**

The voice of Robby Krieger on the phone sounds like Travis in *Paris, Texas.* One note. Bone dry. Exhausted and burned by the whole sentenced-to-life séance that the story of The Doors has become. Yet quite cheerful. Robby was always the most easy-going in The Doors. After Ray Manzarek, who spoke of golden vibrations yet jumped at shadows. Far behind John Densmore, who was still calling Jim "a psychopath, a lunatic" the last time anyone heard from him. Jim Morrison was all fucked-up of course, but in a good way, at first. Then in a bad way, soon after.

"When he was doing the acid and marijuana, he was great," Robby says. "No problems. It's when he started drinking, then he would just turn into an asshole sometimes."

Jim saw himself as a disrupter; Robby was a maintainer. You build but you do it from a place of peace. Robby was a real musician. That's how it was done. Jim couldn't play, had no patience for the studio, saw himself as Rimbaud on the loose in Hollywood. Yet the two opposites attracted when it came to making up stuff together. Jim with his pages and pages of neo-Beat poetry, Robby with his transcendental guitar playing.

I've been reading about your childhood, where you came from, and it sounds like you came from a really nice family. Tell me if any of this is wrong. Your dad was an engineer? You grew up in the 1950s listening to classical music?

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Yes. Not only classical, but pop as well. My mom liked Frank Sinatra and stuff like that, and my dad liked classical. But we had all kinds of records at my house, like flamenco records, stuff like that. Some jazz, even boogie-woogie.

The flamenco stayed with you, became a characteristic of your style in The Doors?

Yeah, for sure. I didn't really get into that stuff until I was maybe thirteen, fourteen years old, but my dad had those records in the house. The first one I really liked was *Peter And The Wolf.*

Is it true that you once broke your record player, which meant you couldn't keep listening to *Peter And The Wolf*, and that's when you began listening to the radio, which got you into more popular stuff of the day like Elvis and Chuck Berry?

No, that's wrong. I broke a *Peter And The Wolf* record. That started me listening to other records.

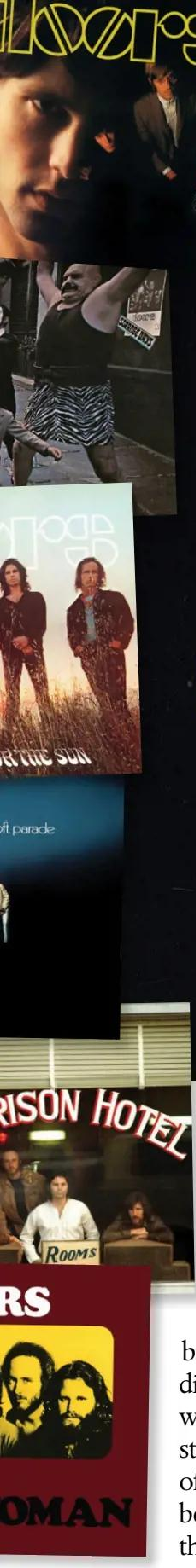
Your first instrument was a trumpet. That got old quick and you took to playing on your folks' piano. What brought you to the guitar?

The reason I started trumpet is because my friend at school was the guy that played the bugle and I thought we could be a team. Another friend up the street had a guitar, and whenever I'd go over there I'd plunk around on it, and I really, really, really liked it. I just immediately had something that I liked. So yeah, that was how it got started. I was probably thirteen.

Did you have a guitarist in your head that you were thinking of, who you wanted to be?

No I didn't. I didn't have any thoughts like that. I just knew I liked that guitar. I liked the sound of it.

As a teenager you were sent to board at the private school Menlo in Menlo Park ⊳



Breaking on through: (l-r) John Densmore, Jim Morrison, Ray Manzarek, Robby Krieger.

because your folks didn't like the company you were keeping. True?
I didn't want to go, but I kept getting in trouble at home and wasn't doing very well [at school]. We would do destructive stuff. Like there was this housing development they were building above my friend's house, and we didn't like that, so we went up and left the water on all night in the kitchen. And crazy stuff; driving tractors around in the middle of night. But Menlo was pretty cool for me because there was kids there from all over the country, and they all brought their records with them and I really got turned on to a lot of cool records at that school.

Were you a rebellious kid?
Yeah, a little bit. A little bit.

Did you ever get into trouble with the law?
Yeah, later. I got busted for pot a couple of times.

That was almost a badge of honour in those days, right? If you were smoking pot or dealing in pot, like you were as a teenager, you were one of the cool kids.
Not really. Not really.

No?
Yeah. But still, then you were really paranoid, because if you get caught twice, then you go to jail for sure. So I was just lucky the second time. They didn't have enough evidence and let me go. The summer after Menlo is when I first got caught. And then, again about a year later, when I was in college.

You were at college in California in the mid-sixties. Was there ever a better time and place to be young? The age of consciousness-raising. Free love. Drugs, back when they still did you good. How aware were you of that?
Well, all that's really part of it. Even before it was popular we took LSD and marijuana. That's when I was up at Santa Barbara – my first college year was at UCSB. Probably seventeen.

That must have been particularly powerful stuff in those days?
Yeah, it was the real stuff. It was really good. I had that stuff once, and then it was never as good again because that was the real stuff.

For a lot of people, that first acid trip was a real turning point in their lives. They couldn't really think about things the same way afterwards. Did you have a similar experience?
Definitely. In fact I became kind of like a Timothy Leary-type guy. Yeah, get acid. Give it to all my friends, and we'd have a big bunch of us who would take it every weekend. Until one time I gave it to this one friend and he freaked out. And then, he got all crazy and I realised, uh-oh, I shouldn't be giving this to people, some bad things can happen. At that point I turned to transcendental meditation.

> **"At first, Jim was writing the songs. The first one I did was *Light My Fire*."**

How old were you when transcendental meditation happened for you?
That was just before The Doors, so I was probably eighteen. Yeah, this was before The Beatles did transcendental meditation. In fact we were the first ones that met Maharishi in the United States. He first came over, sixty-five maybe, sixty-six. My friend's brother had gone to India to find a guru, and he actually met Maharishi and talked him into coming back over here [to LA]. The first meeting we had was up at my friend's house, and it was Maharishi and maybe twelve people. And out of those twelve people it was me, John Densmore and Ray Manzarek.

Unbelievable. And have you stayed with it, the meditation, throughout your life?
Yeah. Not every day, but definitely still do it.

Did that replace the acid?
I still did acid, once in a while, but pretty much the idea was to replace it. Of course, it wasn't as… dramatic. Ray thought it would be. Ray says: "You know that Maharishi is talking about attaining bliss." He always used that word, 'bliss'. And so first, after we got started with TM, we had another meeting, and Maharishi said: "Okay, how's it going with everybody?" And Ray raises his hand and he goes: "No bliss." He thought it would happen after the first-time sessions.

When you started The Doors, was it like: "We just want to get a song in the charts"?
No, no. We definitely… We thought we were as good as the Stones or anybody, because Jim had these amazing works that were nothing like anybody had ever put in rock'n'roll songs.

You were all accomplished musicians. Did you ever trip out while you were playing?
A couple times. A couple times. You mean on acid? Well, Jim and I did. It was too crazy. It's like you don't really… It's too hard to play the songs correctly when you're on acid. For Jim it wasn't so hard, he could just make stuff up, but the musicians had to be a little more together.

Did you ever listen back to Doors music while you were tripping?
Oh, yeah. That was the best part. It was visual. It was in the room. When I took that first trip, we

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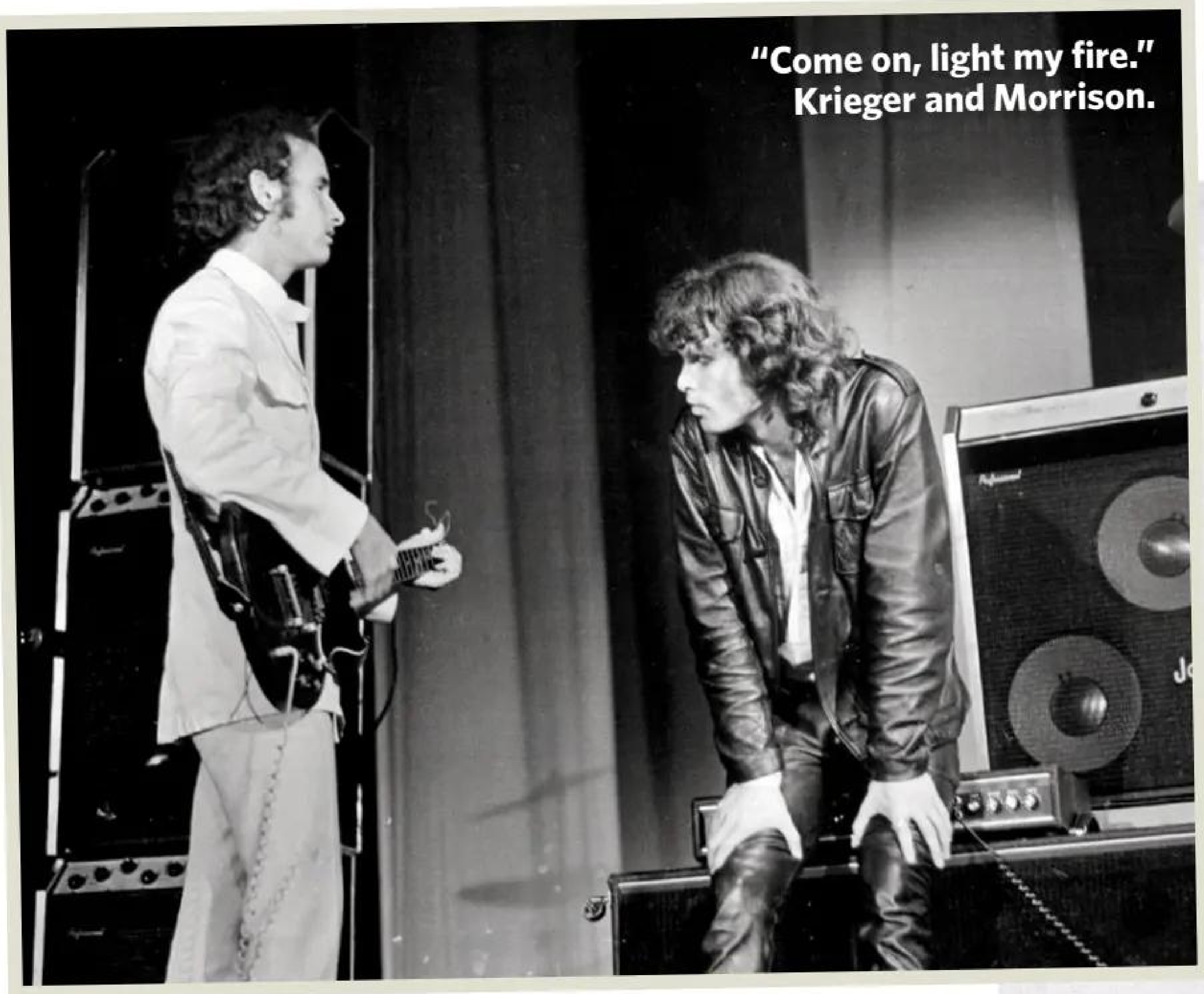
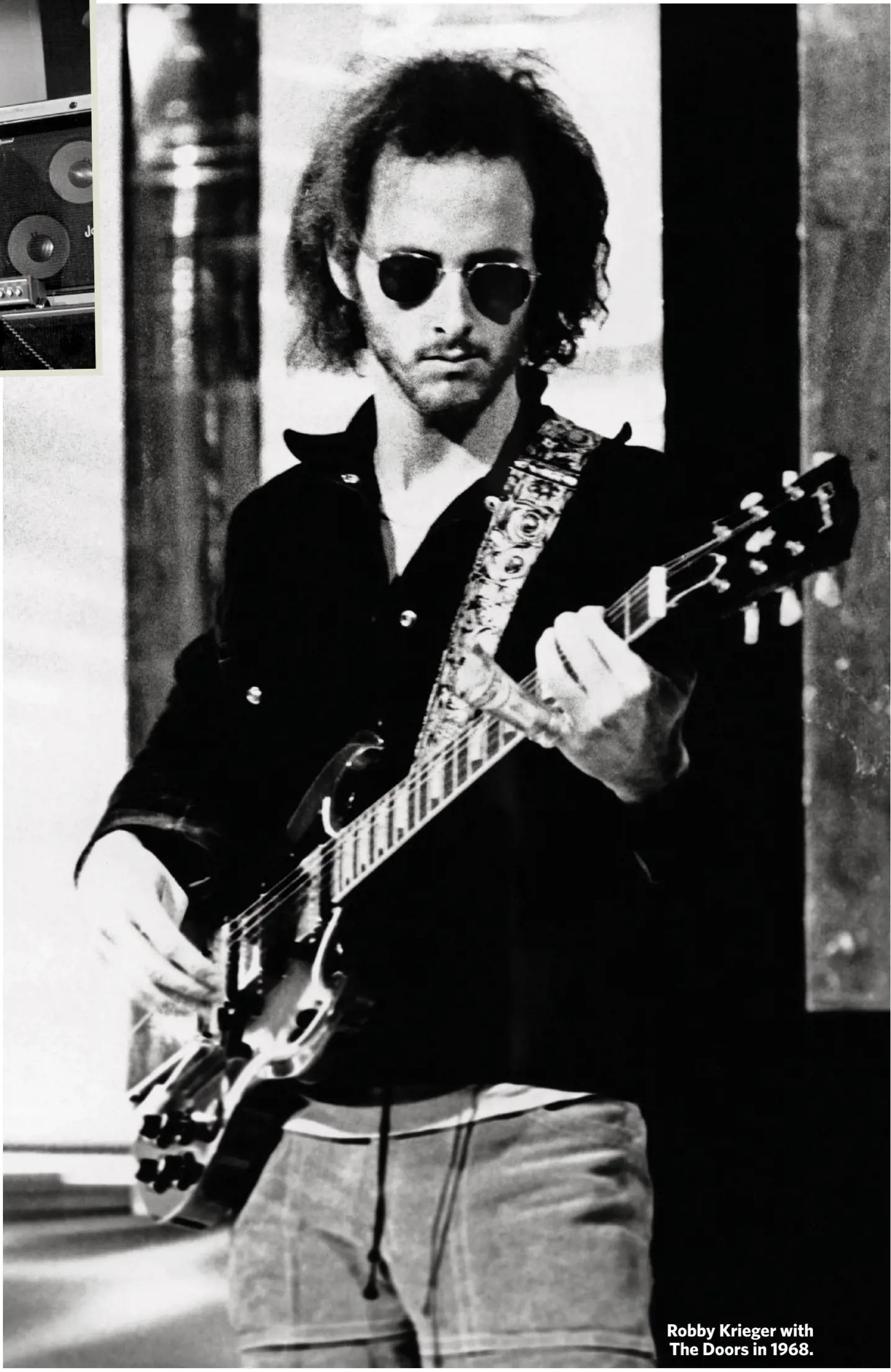


"Come on, light my fire." Krieger and Morrison.



Robby Krieger with The Doors in 1968.

were listening to Paul Butterfield, among other things. And boy, that was great.

And then as a songwriter, you were the guy who came up with so many of the important songs in the story of The Doors: *Light My Fire, Touch Me, Love Me Two Times*. That was all you. Then it was just you and Jim on *The End, People Are Strange, Peace Frog*. Was that something you worked on, or was it a gift that you were able to write these beautiful songs?
I guess it was a gift. At first, Jim was writing the songs because he had all these great works, and I had never really written a song. But at one point he says: "Hey, we don't have enough originals." Because we were doing cover songs as well at that time. He said: "Why don't you guys write something? Why do I have to do all the work?" So the first one I did was *Light My Fire*.

> **"It was always worth all the bullshit because of the music."**

Wow. That's setting the bar pretty high.
Yeah. Yeah. It was downhill after that.

If not quite 'downhill' then certainly circuitous. Six albums in five years, all stone-cold classics – even the duff parts. Yet it wasn't until Jim Morrison died, in squalid circumstances one hot heroin-filled night in Paris in 1971, that the true story of The Doors really began. A few fallow years in the doldrums of the mid-70s, followed by a sudden surge of Doors-related exoticism. Wanna take a ride? Robby did.

Is it true that Jim was jealous that you had written all of *Light My Fire*?
No, I don't think so. He loved singing. He usually got the best response [at Doors shows] if any of his songs were being played.

Ray was always so evangelical about Jim. He kept the myth going. John would get pretty pissed at the whole thing. But what about you? What was your own relationship with Jim?
Well, it was fun because I was the youngest and Jim was my older brother-type relationship, so he and I got along pretty well. Especially at first, we were like brothers. And then slowly, he'd start hanging out with these assholes and we grew further apart. But we always got along great.

That must have been very tense and difficult for you sometimes?
Yeah, of course. Especially on the road. When you're on the road, travelling together, and you never knew what he was going to do. But the music always came first, so he never missed a gig. He'd always complain that we were late to rehearsal. "You guys have girlfriends and stuff," he'd say. "I'm doing it twenty-four hours a day."

And those big moments, like Miami, the infamous 1969 show where a wasted Jim pulled out his penis for all the world to see. Or the time in sixty-eight when he was tripping on stage at the Hollywood Bowl? At the end of those nights, how would you deal with it?
I always… I was probably easy come, easy go. It was the sixties – anything went, you know what I mean? Pretty fun. So no, it didn't bother me as much as John, I'm sure. And Ray, we all put up with him because of the music. John actually quit the band one night. And of course he came back the next day. Never got to that ▷

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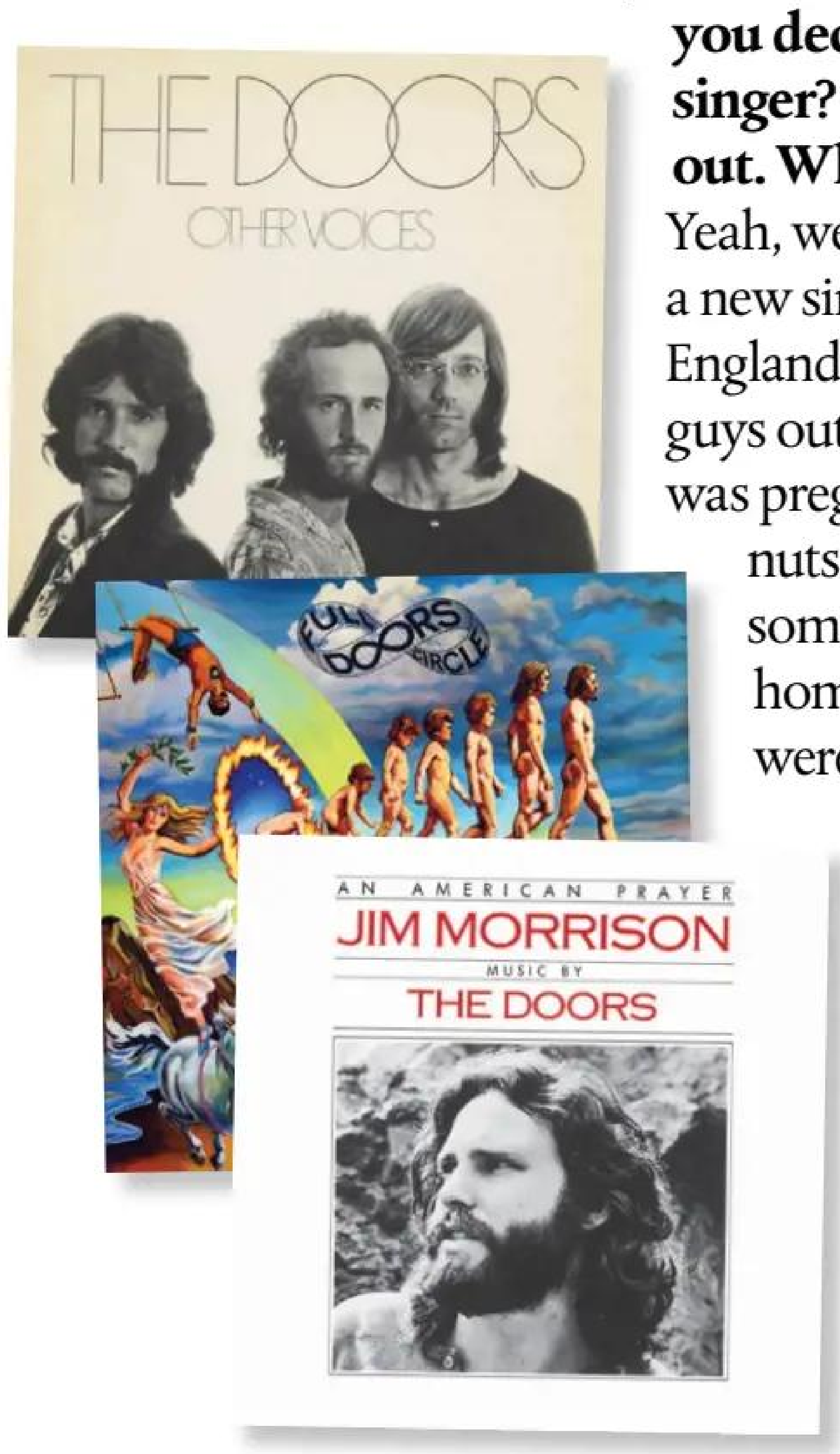
The Doors at the Fillmore East, New York City, 1968: (l-r) Ray Manzarek, Jim Morrison, John Densmore, Robby Krieger.

point for me. It was always worth all the bullshit because of the music.

By the time Jim went to Paris, in 1971, I heard you guys had had enough and that you were already planning for a life without him in the band. Is that true?
No. No, when he went to Paris we fully expected he would come back at some point. Maybe not for months or something, but when he left we kept rehearsing. And we kept writing songs, which turned out to be that next album after Jim died [*Other Voices*, 1971]. Yeah, we fully expected he would be back, because he lived for music and he always talked about being a poet and stuff. But that was really never enough for him. He had to be on stage. Even when he was in Paris he would go and play in these clubs and with these guys.



Do you buy the whole Jim dying in the bath story, or are you familiar with the more recent stories of him dying of a heroin overdose in a Paris club?
I don't really know, but I wouldn't be surprised if heroin had something to do with it, because when you're a drinker you can't do heroin. Jim was a drinker. Do those two together and you're in trouble. And Jim was not well. When he left he had this horrible cough and he just wasn't a hundred per cent. So if somebody gives you some heroin, you start drinking some whisky, and maybe he did die. Maybe the bath was too hot, I don't know. Some people say he died at the club, and then they brought him back to his house and stuck him in the bathtub. That sounds possible to me.

How did you feel about the whole 'Jim is still alive' schtick? I used to love talking to Ray, and he would always say: "I wouldn't be surprised if Jim turned up." And I used to think: "Come on, man, you don't really believe that, do you?"
That was pretty much bullshit. Yeah, he didn't have to do that, and that I think really got him and John in a bad… John was really just about that.

> **"*An American Prayer* was one of my favourites, for sure. I love that stuff."**

After Jim died, what made you decide you wouldn't get a new singer? Because you tried a few guys out. What stopped you in the end?
Yeah, we did. Well, we were going to get a new singer. We all moved over to England. We were starting to try a couple guys out. And Dorothy, Ray's wife, who was pregnant at the time, started going nuts, I guess from the hormones or something, and she wanted to go home. And then the three of us weren't getting along. John and I wanted to do some more hard rock. Ray wanted to do jazzier stuff, so he got pissed off and just left.

Then comes the moment in 1978, that extraordinary posthumous album *An American Prayer*, followed by the famous *Rolling Stone* issue with Jim on the cover and the strap line: 'He's hot, he's sexy and he's dead'. Suddenly you were cool again.
Well, I think more than that, it was when Danny Sugerman wrote his book [*No One Here Gets Out Alive*, 1980], and then the Oliver Stone movie [*The Doors*, 1991] came out. But that album was one of my favourites, for sure. Definitely, it was… Yeah, I love that stuff.

Do you think if he'd lived you might have got to a place with Jim where you made more records like *An American Prayer*?
For sure, yeah. That was sort of the idea in the first place. It was poetry, and jazz, and I bet you that would have been the direction. Yeah. That was the whole idea behind it – like I said, poetry and music together. Guys used to do that back before us. Allen Ginsberg and those kinds of guys, they would do poetry and they might have some jazz playing with them. But for a pop group to do something like that, it hadn't really been done.

Also, Ginsberg didn't look like the young Jim Morrison, did he?
I guess not [laughs].

Another landmark in the creation of The Doors' myth was the use of *The End* in Francis Ford Coppola's film *Apocalypse Now*.
Yeah, that was amazing. [Coppola] actually had the right to use any Doors song, all of the songs, if he

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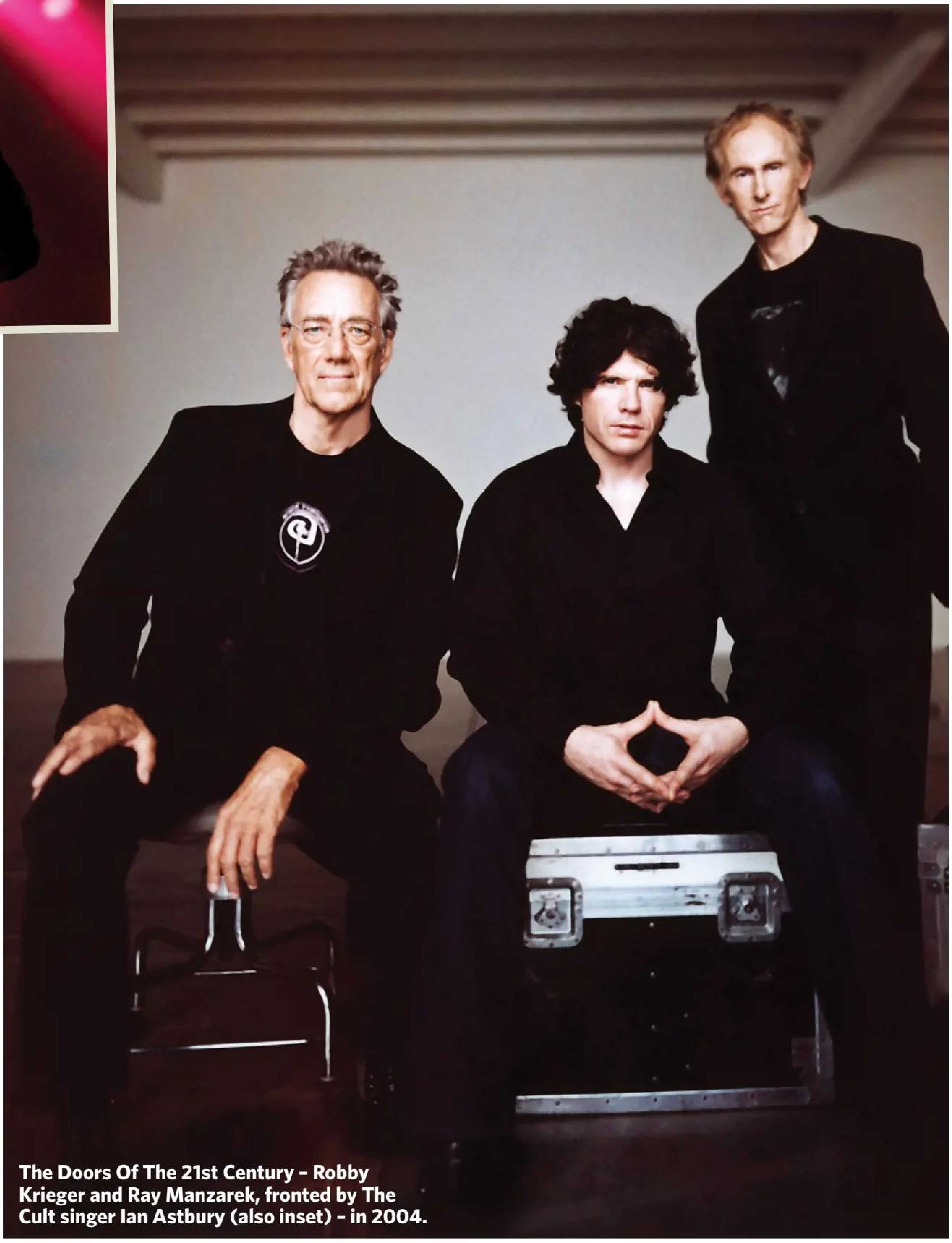

The Doors Of The 21st Century – Robby Krieger and Ray Manzarek, fronted by The Cult singer Ian Astbury (also inset) – in 2004.

wanted to. He said later that he tried *Light My Fire* and all these other songs in various parts, but… they just didn't fit. *The End* was perfect because there was so much instrumental parts. That first scene with the helicopters was amazing. When Jim and I wrote that song, at first it was just a little love song and it was this beautiful friend. It wasn't none of that other stuff. But as we played it every night, he would add stuff. We'd get longer and longer. But I always had the idea for that song to make it like an East Indian sounding [guitar]. Nobody else was really doing that on the guitar that much.

After the movie, the book, the *Rolling Stone* cover, the *Prayer* album, we're in this realm where The Doors story has become a mythology. Did you recognise yourself in Sugerman's book, or was it him tripping out on his own kind of fantasy island.

It was some of both. Mostly his own. What I didn't like was how he puts words into Jim's mouth, you know? He would write down conversations that might have happened in his mind, but not for real. Yeah. Oliver Stone did the same thing. He wrote the dialogue in that movie. He had a good writer, but for some reason he didn't like it and he ended up doing it himself, which I think was a mistake.

What did you make of Stone's movie when you saw it?

Well, the music parts were really good. Val Kilmer [who played Morrison] was good. It was great. But I actually worked on the movie as a musical advisor, so I was there when they did all the concert parts, and they were very right on. But just the whole thing with Jim and Pam [Courson, Morrison's girlfriend at the time of his death], and all that stuff, it wasn't based on reality.

Then there was the shock collaboration with Ray in the early 2000s, initially billed as The Doors Of The 21st Century, with Morrison disciple Ian Astbury from The Cult on vocals. Ian is obviously totally in love with the whole Jim thing, and actually does a pretty good version. What was the deal there?

Well, yeah. Before that, I hadn't played Doors music for years. I was doing jazz in my Robby Krieger Band. I had my kids in the band and stuff, and so I was having fun doing that. But then I started seeing these Doors tribute bands popping up all over the place. And some of them were pretty good. I used to sit in with them once in a while, and I would see how much fun everybody was having. And little by little, I would just put a couple of Doors songs into my set. And then at one point, I was talking to Ray and said: "Shit, why don't we go back out and do The Doors? These tribute bands are doing great, and we could do it a lot better than that." And we asked John to do it, but he didn't want to do it, so we ended up getting [Police drummer] Stewart Copeland and we went out and did a couple of shows, and they were great with Ian singing.

> **"I said to Ray: 'Why don't we go back out and do The Doors? These tribute bands are doing great, and we could do it a lot better than that.'"**

Why didn't John want to be involved?

I really wish I knew. He says… I think it's because he couldn't get along with Ray. He probably figured Ray would try to take over. Because when Jim was around, Ray was held in check, do you know what I mean? You could tell after Jim was gone, Ray became kind of the spokesman of The Doors, all the stuff he used to say about trying to make it like Jim wasn't dead and stuff. It was kind of creepy, because he was obviously just doing it to try to keep the sales up or something. I think that's what John was thinking. But after really talking about it with Ray, he just loved The Doors and he didn't want people to forget. Maybe he went too far.

You could say that if he hadn't done that and he hadn't been such a torchbearer for the legend, The Doors wouldn't have to stayed as mysterious and glamorous.

And maybe Danny wouldn't have wrote the book, who knows?

Now, when you talk about the influence The Doors have had, it would be easier to try to think of a band that wasn't influenced by The Doors, which must be very gratifying for you?

Yeah, it is. It's kind of cool, for sure.

And what about the crazies? Jim brought out the crazies. How did you handle it?

We've had plenty of those. Plenty. There was one guy after Jim died, he used to hang around our rehearsal place. We called him Cigar Pain,

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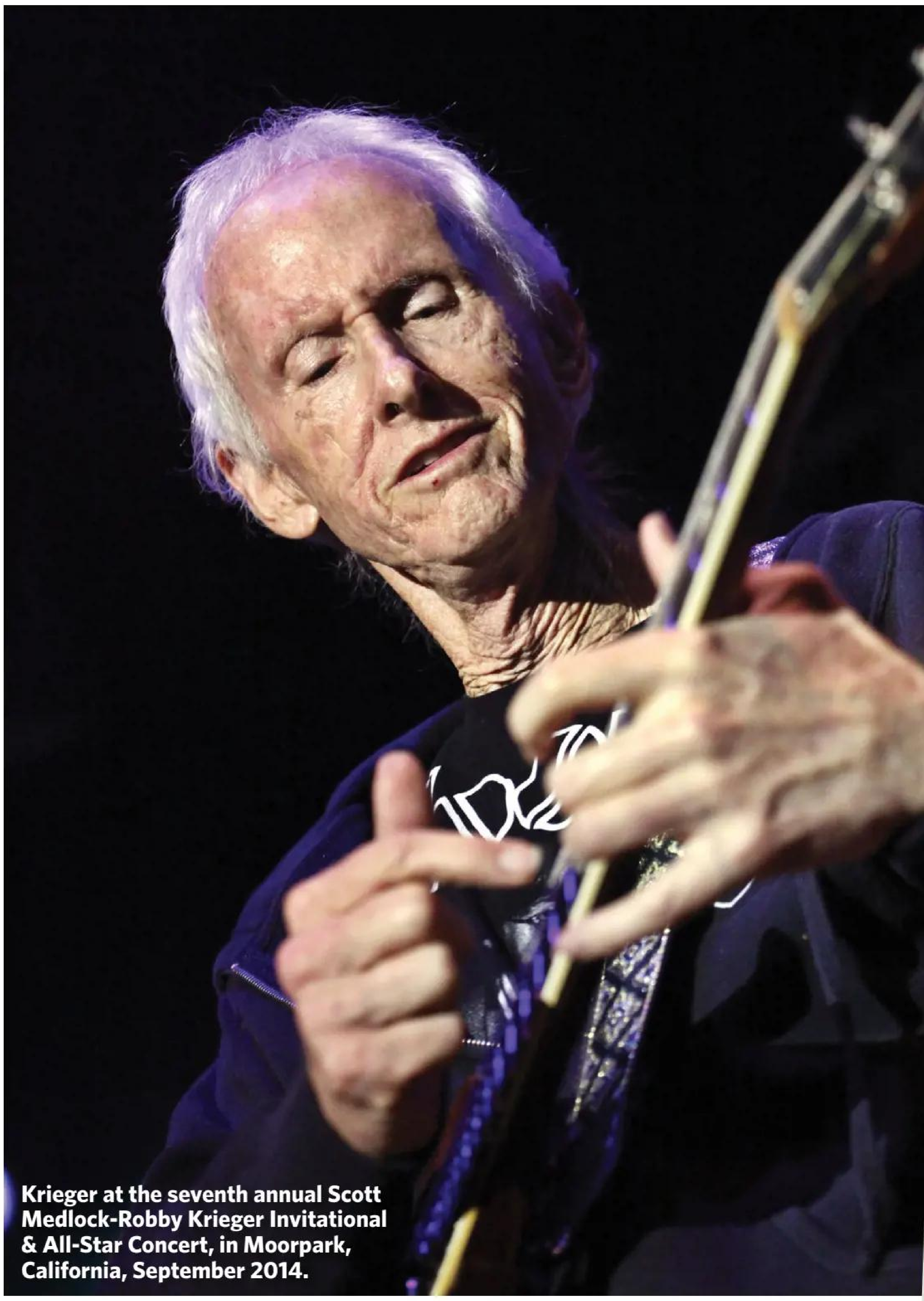
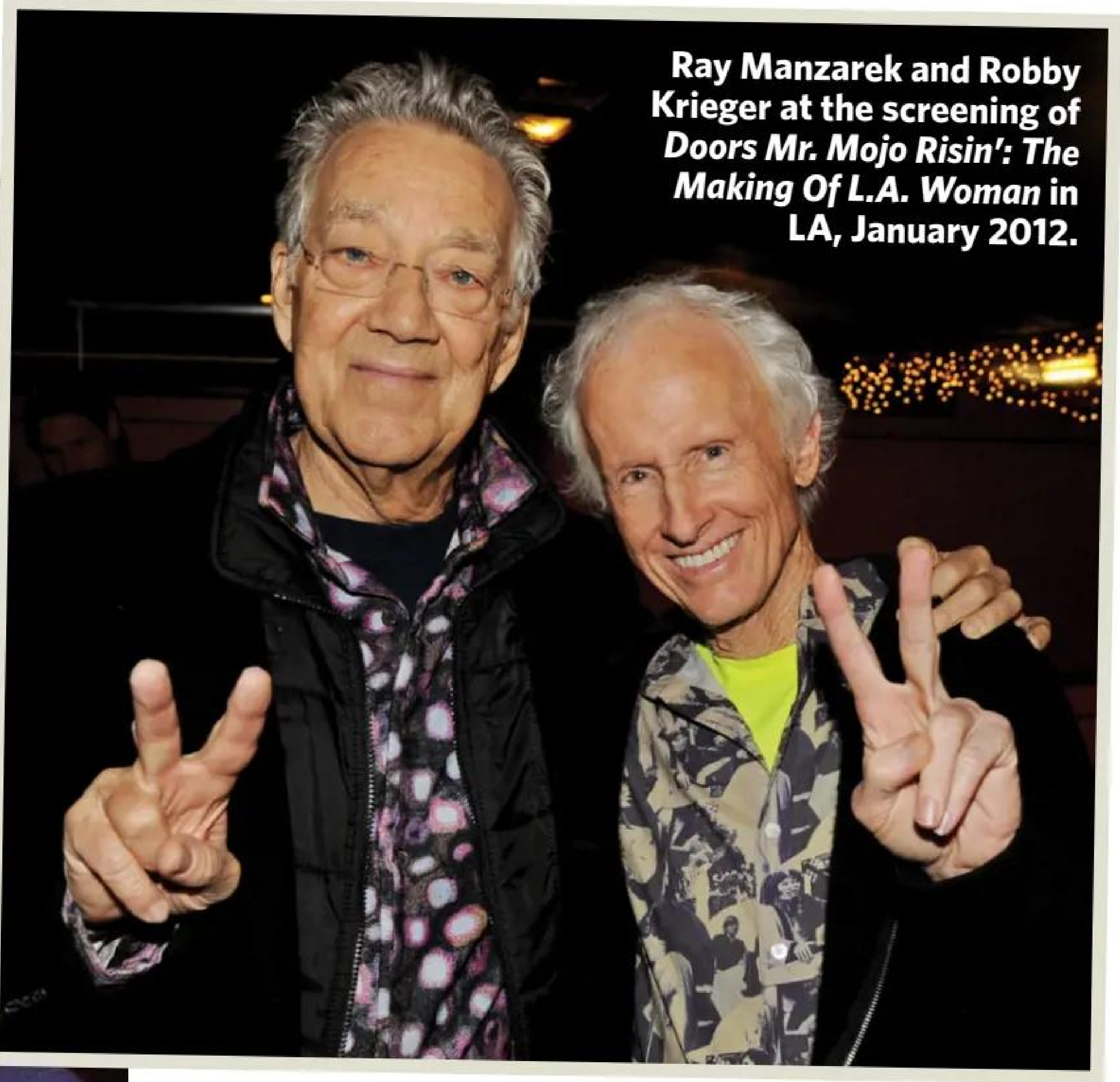


Krieger at the seventh annual Scott Medlock-Robby Krieger Invitational & All-Star Concert, in Moorpark, California, September 2014.



Ray Manzarek and Robby Krieger at the screening of *Doors Mr. Mojo Risin': The Making Of L.A. Woman* in LA, January 2012.

because he actually stuck a lit cigar down his throat to make his voice sound more like Jim's, he said. He was really out there. And then there was a guy who stopped me in my car one time. "Hey, are you Robby Krieger?" "Yeah." He says: "We have to take acid and die together." I said maybe next week.

Because of that sort of thing do you have to take extra precautions when you're travelling around?

Well, yeah, and I'm always on guard, but it's… And there's this girl. If you see the new movie, *Break On Thru* [*Break On Thru – A Celebration Of Ray Manzarek* is melding a 2016 tribute performance in LA when Robby and John were joined on stage performing Doors songs by alt-rock royalty, including various members of the Foo Fighters, X, Stone Temple Pilots and Jane's Addiction, to name just a few], at the end, when we all do *Light My Fire*, you notice there is this blonde chick in the frame. Yeah, well, she just snuck in there somehow, didn't even have a ticket. Somehow, she sneaks on stage when we're doing *Light My Fire*. Oh my God. And then she showed up to the night when I was playing with Miley Cyrus. Did you hear about that?

> **"Jeff Beck is my hero. He's just gotten better constantly, and I want to be like that. I want to try some new stuff, all the time."**

Please do tell.

This guy is re-doing the original *Morrison Hotel*, yeah? So he put on this big wingding at the Sunset Marquis hotel to promote his thing, and he got a bunch of cool musicians together and we did a bunch of Doors songs. Miley did *Roadhouse Blues* and *Back Door Man*. I don't know who did *Light My Fire*. Oh my God, who was that guy? I can't remember. Anyway, a bunch of people were there. And there she is [the blonde chick]. She somehow got backstage again, and she had the flu or something and she could barely talk. She was getting in my face, and I'm: "Get away! Get off!"

I'm laughing, but it's just too much, isn't it?

Yeah. They're everywhere, you know?

Did you ever go to Jim's grave at Père Lachaise in Paris?

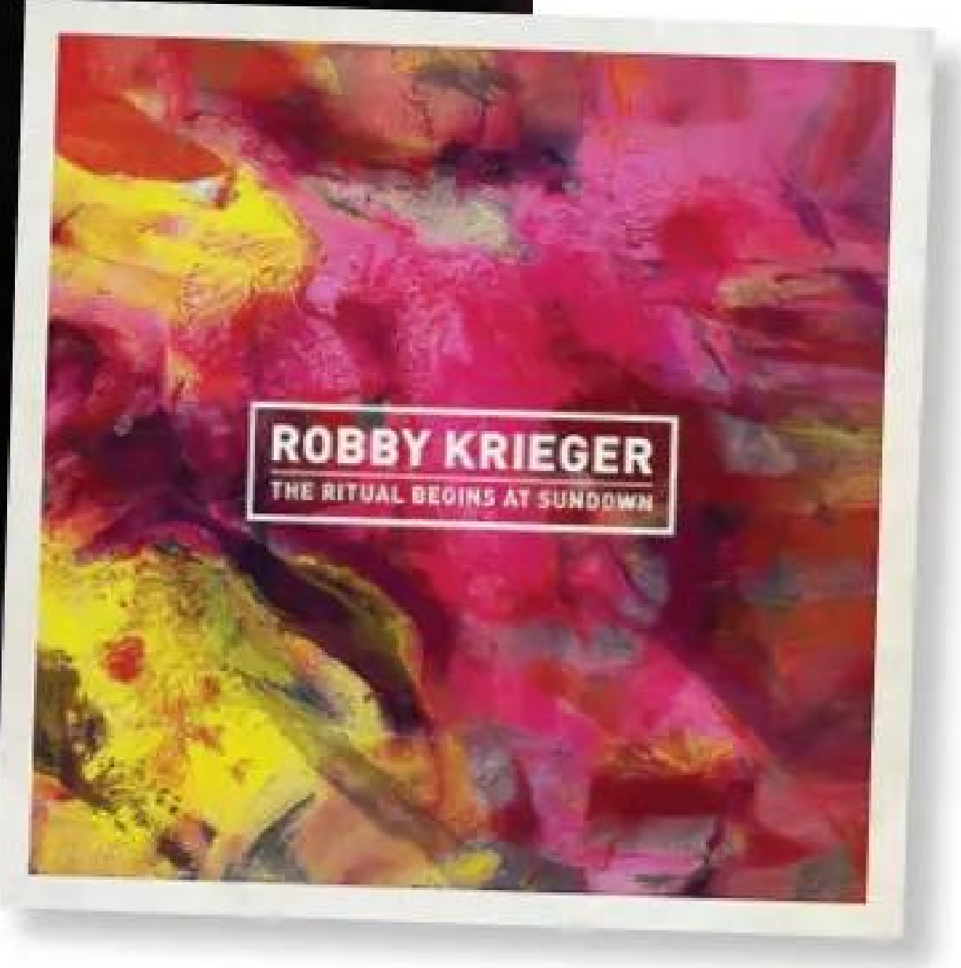
Oh, yeah. I've been there plenty of times. Yeah. In the movie, it showed where John and Ray and I were there. Did you notice?

I just wondered if you ever went there on your own?

Yeah. Every time I go to Paris I drop by there, check it out.

Jim gets some interesting people hanging out there with him.

Yes. It's kind of cool, all the people that are there. All the famous people. And Jim loved that place. He always said he wanted to be buried there.



Unlike almost every other rock star survivor of the late 60s and early-70s, Robby Krieger still makes new music, rather than merely recycling the past. His latest solo album, *The Ritual Begins At Sundown*, is his first for 10 years. And it sounds unlike anything he's done before. It's jazz and funk and even pop, but built in a rock universe.

How long did it take you to make the new record?

It took quite a while. It was about three years. Yeah, my buddy, Arthur Barrow, who is a bass player, he used to be Zappa's guy. I've done stuff with him for years, ever since my first solo album. I've known him since the seventies. We really get along together musically. So we start writing some stuff, and then we got a couple of the other guys from Zappa's old band, Tommy Mars, the keyboard guy, and a bunch of really great musicians around town, and we tried. We wanted to write stuff together. One guy might have an idea for something, and then we would all contribute after that. So it was kind of cool in that regard.

It's a proper jazz record as well, isn't it? You can all really, really play, and you're playing together. You're listening. You're taking your cues. You're going with it.

Exactly, yeah. That's what good musicians do. It's not just guys shredding, which happens too often. Jeff Beck is my hero. He's just gotten better constantly, and I want to be like that. I want to try some new stuff, all the time, and just not rely on the old stuff.

GETTY x2

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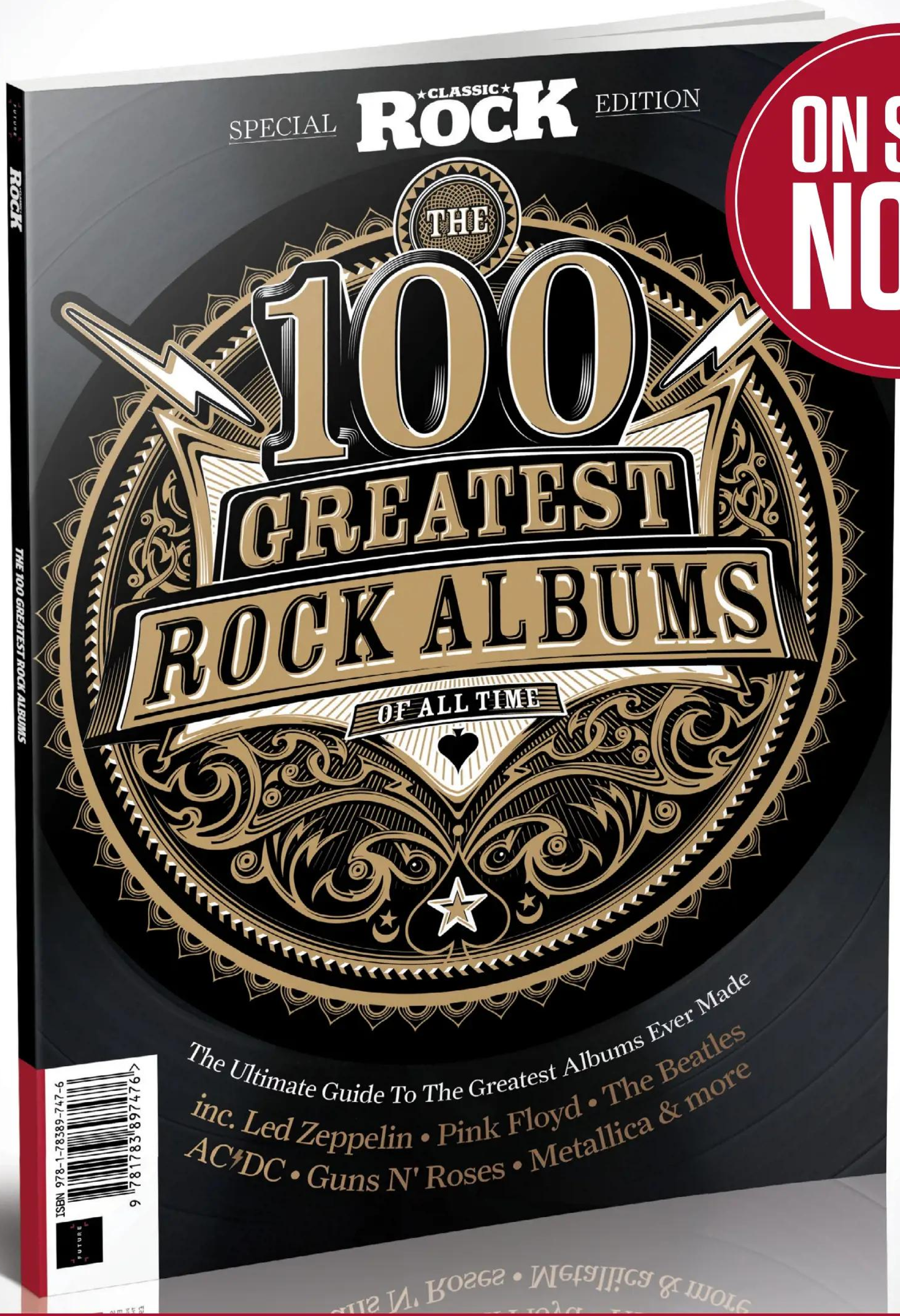
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THE STORIES BEHIND THE SONGS

The Doors

Love Her Madly

The Doors' last single before Jim Morrison died wouldn't even have been recorded if their producer had had his way. Guitarist Robby Krieger, who wrote the song, explains why.

Words:
Max Bell

Photograph:
Chris Walter/Getty

"To be honest? I was bored." Robby Krieger, guitarist with The Doors, is in his house in Benedict Canyon, Los Angeles, recalling the writing of his song *Love Her Madly*, the second track on the band's final album, *L.A. Woman*.

It's September 1970 and The Doors are in a precarious position. The very real possibility of singer Jim Morrison being imprisoned for inciting a riot and public indecency at the Dinner Key Auditorium in Miami the previous March overshadows them. Promoters refuse to book them and gigs are sporadic; lengthy tours impossible.

Having appeared at the Isle of Wight festival on August 29, they're back in Los Angeles. While Morrison is constructing an appeal against a six-month sentence and a $50,000 fine handed out on September 20, the rest of the band, Krieger recalls, "are cooling our heels".

"But I knew we'd have to get back in the studio," he says, "so I went and bought a new guitar – an acoustic Gibson 335 12-string. One day I was strumming the new purchase and I stumbled over a nice riff and some shuffle chords, and *Love Her Madly* started to take shape."

Writing lyrics was not difficult for Krieger, who wrote "25 per cent of the words and at least 75 per cent of the music" for The Doors. *Light My Fire*, their No.1 hit, was his (with a '*funeral pyre*' interjection from Jim). He also wrote *You're Lost Little Girl* and *Love Me Two Times* for the *Strange Days* album, *Wintertime Love* and *Yes, The River Knows* on *Waiting For The Sun*, and all four singles taken from 1969's *The Soft Parade*. There was *Touch Me* (a No.3 in the US) that Morrison disliked, as well as *Wishful Sinful, Tell All The People* (another Morrison 'yuck'), *Runnin' Blue*…

"Despite Miami we weren't in decline," Krieger says of The Doors of late 1970. "The *Morrison Hotel* album and *Absolutely Live* sold well. But the trouble with Jim was that even when things were good he'd find a way to fuck it up. That was his job."

It's mid-October, and Robby has *Love Her Madly* in decent shape. "Usually all my songs are about the four elements: fire, air, water, earth. This one wasn't typical for me. Lyrically I fixed on the idea of a guy whose girlfriend is his obsession but she keeps on walking out and giving him the runaround. That was me. I wrote it about Lynn, now my wife."

Lynn Veres Krieger, the subject of *Love Her Madly*, was a go-go dancer from New Jersey who met The Doors in New York in '67 at the Ondine discotheque – a place frequented by The Velvet Underground and Andy Warhol's Factory crowd. She caught Morrison's eye when her falsies slipped out of her bra, and they had a brief fling, before she gravitated to Robby. Lynn and Robby would marry in 1972.

Krieger didn't put *Love Her Madly* on to cassette – he didn't own one. "I came into our workshop on La Cienega and sung them the song. It was a bluesy, almost folk rock thing Arthur Lee and Love could have done. Ray Manzarek put on some great classical harpsichord style keyboards, and John Densmore added a military drum and a shuffle, so it had a slightly Latin feel.

"Jim always told me: 'Put something in that makes the listener confused.'"

It was an easy-listening song, but Jim loved that; he liked to croon. When he wanted to he could sing like Frank Sinatra, who he listened to a lot. Jim made it different and better. His favourite part was the line: '*All your love is gone, so sing a lonely song/Of a deep blue dream, seven horses seem, to be on the mark.*' Jim always told me: 'Put in something that makes the listener confused.' It didn't mean much – seven horses were like a lucky omen. Jim liked horse racing from his Florida days. The bit about '*seem to be on the mark*' simply fitted the military rhythm."

One person who didn't rate *Love Her Madly* was the Doors's long-time producer, Paul A Rothchild.

"It was early on in the *L.A. Woman* sessions," says Krieger. "Paul heard *Riders On The Storm* and *Love Her Madly*, and dropped his bombshell: 'I am not going to produce this! It's cocktail music!' The story goes that he'd just finished Janis Joplin's *Pearl* album, and she died in early October. A few days later he sees Jim in bad shape and thinks: 'This is all going the same way.' He thought we were on the way down, and didn't want to be dragged along. But Jim was very much alive then, so I don't know his real reasoning."

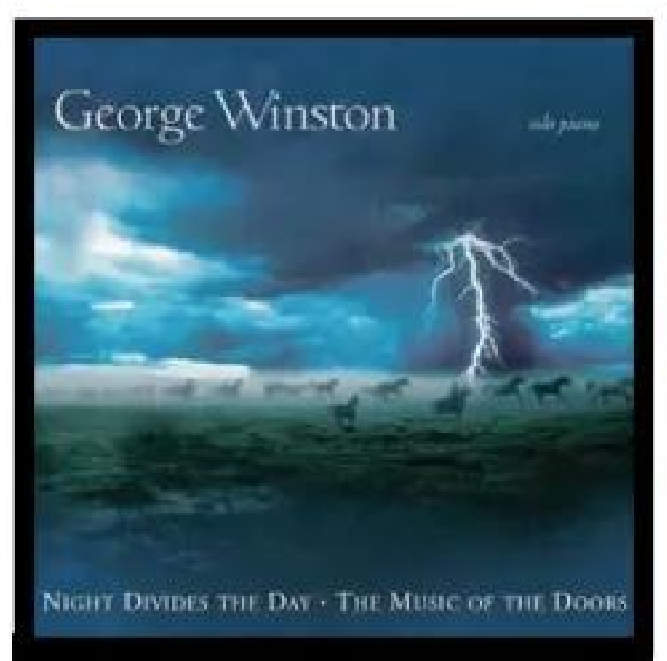
With engineer Bruce Botnick now sharing production with Krieger, *Love Her Madly* was completed in early December with bass player Jerry Scheff. "Jerry was vital. We brought him in because he'd been on the road with Elvis Presley and he was hot. His loping bass part was something I suggested because I'd heard his playing with Elvis and I wanted that exact feel."

When The Doors delivered the finished *L.A. Woman* album to Elektra Records in early 1971, boss Jac Holzman told them *Love Her Madly* would be the first single.

"I wasn't too happy about that because I thought it was way too commercial," Robby says. "I wanted *Riders On The Storm*, it had more impact. But Holzman said: 'No. FM radio is starting to get big and this will sound terrific.' He was right. When I first heard it, driving round LA in February, it sounded great, it leapt out of the speakers. It had perfect high-end frequencies for car radio, and Scheff's bass made it boom. I told Jerry that years later and he said: 'Yeah, I know. Where's the money?'"

Jim Morrison left the Doors to go to Paris in the same week in March 1971 that *Love Her Madly* was released. Outside of the studio he only ever sung it twice: once at the Dallas State Fair Music Hall during the Doors' second set (he was too drunk to make all of the first one), and finally at New Orleans Warehouse on December 12, 1970. These were the last times the Doors ever appeared live as a group.

While Jim had less than four months left to live, Krieger can look back on a triumphant swansong with the errant singer, having written the final hit The Doors had in the band's lifetime.



LOVE HER MORE

Robby Krieger's son, Waylon, keeps the *Love Her Madly* flame alive on stage with various other famous rock star sons of, including Erin 'Son Of Miles' Davis, and Allman Brothers offspring Berry Oakley and Duane Betts, in a band known as OKB (or Bloodline, and even Lifeline). Tickets sell faster when singer Cliff Morrison appears, though Cliff's paternity is open to question.

Fans of the song should check out pianist George Winston's all-Doors covers album *Night Divides The Day*, or root out any Blue Öyster Cult boots where Robby is featured; best draw a veil over the *Forrest Gump* soundtrack and the 21st Century Doors.

THE FACTS

RELEASE DATE
March 1971
HIGHEST CHART POSITION
Did not chart in UK; US No.11
PERSONNEL
Jim Morrison
Vocals
Robby Krieger
Acoustic and electric guitar
Ray Manzarek
Keyboards
John Densmore
Drums
Jerry Scheff
Bass
PRODUCER
Bruce Botnick and The Doors
WRITTEN BY
Robby Krieger
LABEL
Elektra

The Doors: Robby Krieger, bottom right, wrote *Love Her Madly* for his future wife.

L.A. WOMAN
and the last days of
JIM MORRISON

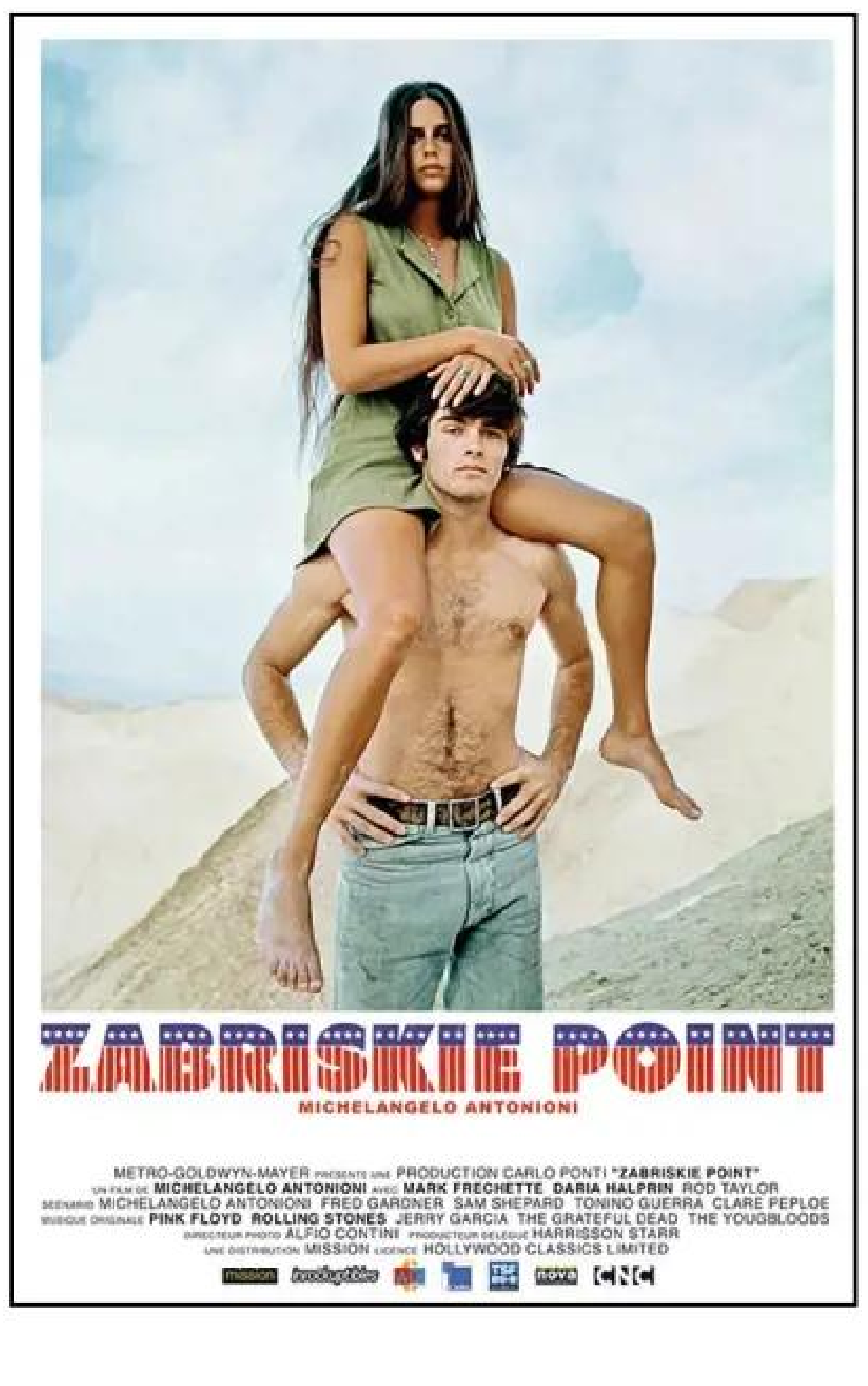
Forget what you think you know. All-new interviews with Jim Morrison's bandmates and Parisian friends and associates shine new light on the making of the Doors' final album – and the mysterious death of their singer in July 1971.

Words: **Max Bell**

November 1970. Sunset Sound. 6650 Sunset Boulevard. Jim Morrison, Robby Krieger, Ray Manzarek, John Densmore, engineer Bruce Botnick and producer Paul A. Rothchild are staggering through rehearsals for the Doors' sixth studio recording. Even though they are back where the Doors made their first two albums, the mood is deadly. The band have busked through a meagre collection of material, including the germ of *L.A. Woman*, basic chords for *Riders On The Storm*, some blues jams, and a couple of discards, namely the demo for *Hyacinth House* and one track they've already finished. Tentatively called *Latin America*, it's been offered up for Michelangelo Antonioni's film *Zabriskie Point*. The director rejected the song after the Doors played it live for him.

DOORS
L.A.WOMAN

Long-time Doors producer Paul Rothchild walked off *L.A. Woman*. The track *L'America* had already been rejected for the movie *Zabriskie Point*.



"We played it so loud we blew his ears out," says Doors drummer John Densmore.

Equally unimpressed, Rothchild slumps over the console. "You know what? I can't do this anymore. This isn't working. This music is like cocktail jazz. It's awful. You produce it. I can't." Bombshell dropped, Rothchild sweeps up his belongings, including a bag of grass he calls his 'Killer Destroyer' stash, gives everyone a brief hug, and exits to stunned silence.

Ray Manzarek recalls the day. "We were giving Paul a preview and he was bored. We played the songs very badly – with Jim – but there was no chi, no energy. We didn't want to be back in Sunset and Paul couldn't bring us back to life. In that instant he was right. As soon as he left the room, that's when *L.A. Woman* started."

Rothchild's lethargy was understandable. The Elektra Records soundman had fallen out with label boss Jac Holzman and gone freelance. The Doors felt like old ground. He'd spent fractious time in 1970 producing *Morrison Hotel* and then sifted through hours of stage tapes for *Absolutely Live*. He'd also endured the trauma of producing Janis Joplin's *Pearl* album. Joplin died before its completion – aged 27, like Brian Jones. Carousing with Jim one night the singer had mumbled, "Brian, Janis, Jimi – you're drinkin' with number four". It was the last straw.

By 1970 the people prepared to buy Morrison's antics, and those who weren't, had divided into camps. Paul Rothchild was now in the latter group. "Morrison looked ugly," he said. "He was unhappy with his role as a national sex symbol, and after the Miami trial he did everything in his power to obliterate that. He gained enormous weight; he grew a beard. I quit because I'd grown tired of dragging the Doors from one album to another, especially an unwilling Jim, and he had virtually dried up. Two out of three times Jim would either not want to work or would go into the studio drunk. He would intentionally disrupt things… never fruitfully. Most of my energies were spent trying to coordinate Jim with the group."

Doors manager Bill Siddons, who was virtually inured to Morrison's excesses with booze, cocaine, no-shows, hangers on and the endless liabilities of the band's live act before during and after Miami, remembered one afternoon "when Jim came into rehearsals and drank 36 beers".

Ever loyal to an old friend, even Manzarek agrees – the situation was dire. "Jim was an alcoholic. A genetic predisposition to alcoholism ran in his family. It was hard to tell him to clean up his act. One day around the *Morrison Hotel* sessions me, John and Robby sat him down at Robby's dad's house by the pool, and told him, 'This is seriously affecting us all now as a group, and you physically.' Jim says, 'I know. I drink too much and I'm trying to quit.' Which was a rare admission. We told him we'd help. Jim said, 'Thanks. Now let's go get some lunch at the Lucky-U. I want some funky Mexican food and a drink.' That was Morrison. The romantic poet who wrote '*I woke up this morning, got myself a beer*'. A real 'Fuck you!' line. Unfortunately that was the reality. Jim's attitude was always, 'Look out man, I'm hell bent on destruction'. We couldn't moralise. We figured he might emerge from the spiral, but working with Jim in the studio was the only way we knew how to transcend his problem."

After Rothchild's departure the Doors went to the Moo-Ling restaurant and considered their options. Sunset was out; likewise a return to Elektra's own studio. Krieger offered to produce but Morrison had a plan.

"Why don't we just do it in our rehearsal room, in the Doors office? We like it there. Bruce – you produce it with the guys. You know how I work," he smiled.

Once Holzman agreed to the idea, Botnick transformed the Doors Workshop at 8512 Santa Monica Boulevard on the corner of La Cienega into a makeshift studio. The squat two-storey building was near a variety of cheap motels, strip joints, liquor stores and burlesque bars – Morrison's kinda

Jim Morrison and Pamela Courson, photographed by Edmund Teske in 1970 at the Bronson Caves, Hollywood, California. Courson moved to Paris during the making of *L.A. Woman*.

GETTY IMAGES

> “WE SAT JIM DOWN AND TALKED TO HIM ABOUT IT. HE SAID, ‘I KNOW, I DRINK TOO MUCH…’”
>
> ***RAY MANZAREK***

town. The room was a mess. Morrison's desk was covered in bottles of tequila and bourbon while an ashtray with a peeling tartan design overflowed with discarded joints and cigar butts.

Botnick hauled the old 8-track board the Doors used on *Strange Days* across the street from Elektra and set up his brand new console on the first floor with an intercom microphone over his head to communicate with the band, out of sight downstairs. "It was like home from home," Botnick says. "There was a pinball table and paintings on the wall. One was of a nude with a hole cut out of her head. I hung packing blankets and towels up for baffling and wired up the remote. It was primitive."

John Densmore didn't mind. "I used the same drum kit I had on the first record," he says. "It was like going back to the metaphorical garage in Venice where we started. I told Ray, I wanted to get the feeling Miles Davis had on *Live At Carnegie Hall*, where you could make a mistake, but you went for passion."

Speaking from his office in Sherman Oaks, Bill Siddons recalls the sessions: "I'd rented the Workshop and built the studio wall so they could rehearse. Bruce used my office as his studio. The board was on my desk. Mostly I worked there in the day and they came in at night. I didn't hang around. The record works because they focused on each other. They couldn't see the producer. It was different. Using the clubhouse was a masterstroke. They made the album from their heart."

CAST OF CHARACTERS
LOS ANGELES

JIM MORRISON, RAY MANZAREK, ROBBY KRIEGER, JOHN DENSMORE
THE DOORS

BRUCE BOTNICK
CO-PRODUCED *L.A. WOMAN* WITH THE DOORS

PAUL A. ROTHCHILD
PREVIOUS DOORS PRODUCER

JAC HOLZMAN
ELEKTRA RECORDS BOSS

BILL SIDDONS
DOORS MANAGER

PAMELA SUSAN COURSON
MORRISON'S LONG-TERM PARTNER. DIED OF HEROIN O.D. IN DECEMBER 1974

GETTY

Morrison was fairly straight during the early days of recording, at least by his extraordinary standards. Botnick: "He was punctual, professional, all those boring things." According to Botnick, "some sessions even began in the afternoon! The Doors were making the record Jim wanted, rather than what was expected. His notion of the Doors was as a blues band, and not a pop group".

Hanging off his stage mic, a gold Electrovoice-676-G, Morrison sang in front of a tile on which he'd written 'A clean slate is an empty slate'; a possible jibe at Rothchild. For certain songs he crouched in the doorway of the toilet, having ripped the door off for good measure. He was in the mood. As Densmore says, "If he kept his alcoholism out of the studio everything worked great. He was in trouble, yeah, he was, but without the world around him, everything else went away."

> "IF JIM KEPT HIS ALCOHOLISM OUT OF THE STUDIO, EVERYTHING WORKED GREAT."
> ***JOHN DENSMORE***

For the most part Morrison knuckled down. The bulk of recording was completed in six days. The other Doors knew the singer wasn't likely to endure the months *Morrison Hotel* had taken. During recording he gave an interview to the *Village Voice*, describing this rapid process. "This new album, it went really quick. Like a song a day, which is unusual. Like the first album. Amazing. Partly because we went back to the original instrumentation: just the four of us and a bass player."

With most of the basics finished, Morrison said he was ready for more down time. "I don't read or write much. I don't do much of anything. But I will get back in the saddle. I've just been kind of lazy. I go through cycles of non-productiveness, and then intense periods of creativity."

The interviewer mentioned Morrison's weight gain.

"Why is it so onerous to be fat? Fat is beautiful," the singer replied. "I feel great when I'm fat, I feel like a tank y'know? I feel like a large mammal, a big beast. When I move through the corridors or across the lawn, I just feel like I could knock anybody out of my way. It's terrible to be thin and wispy – you could get knocked over by a strong wind."

Fuelled on a succession of screwdrivers, Morrison outlined what it took to gain entrance to his circle: "You gotta get smashed and make a fool of yourself in a public place. You gotta get eighty-sixed [barred] from seven nightclubs. That's the Irish thing. I hang around mostly with the Irish – and the Italians." And then he challenged the reporter to a bout of arm wrestling.

He was less flippant with the *Los Angeles Free Press*. Explaining the new recording approach, Morrison let slip "we do a lot better when we're rehearsing. We leave a tape running. It's a lot cheaper and faster that way. Not that the other producer [Rothchild] was a bad influence… but we'll be ourselves for better or worse, co-producing with Botnick."

At the end of the interview Morrison gave his then definitive attitude towards narcotics. "There seem to be a lot of people shooting smack and speed now. Alcohol and heroin and downers – these are painkillers. Alcohol for me, because it's traditional. Also, I hate scoring. I hate the kind of sleazy sexual connotations of scoring from people, so I never do that. I like alcohol; you can go down to any corner store or bar and it's right across the table."

By the end of November, five of *L.A. Woman*'s ten songs were near completion. The opening song *The Changeling* was plucked from one of Morrison's 1968 notebooks. A classic rocker à la *Roadhouse Blues*, *The Changeling* contained the mantra *'I had money, I had none'*, summing up Morrison's attitude to life. An obvious single, said the band. Robby arrived with *Love Her Madly*, one of his 'girl's-driving-me-nuts' numbers. At Jac Holzman's insistence, it became the album's lead-off single, released a week before Morrison departed for Paris on March 1971. Krieger pleaded for *Riders On The Storm* but was overruled.

The non-album B-side was a jokey blues romp written by Willie Dixon called *(You Need Meat) Don't Go No Further.* Sung by Manzarek, it epitomises the 'hurried out-take', with only an occasional grunt from Morrison. *Hyacinth House* was a Doors collaboration, whipped into shape by Manzarek, although Morrison and Krieger came up with the basic track while tripping at Robby's idyllic beachfront house in 1969, where they recorded a demo in the guitarist's home studio, marvelling at the hyacinths growing round Krieger's pool.

Latin America was renamed *L'America*. The original track was left intact, though Morrison overdubbed a guttural single word 'fuck' and Botnick phased Densmore's drum break. Lyrically it was a slight piece concerning a short holiday Jim took in Mexico with his drinking crew. It was all about sex with prostitutes, marijuana and tequila – hence *'I took a trip down to L'America, to trade some beads for a pint of Gold'*.

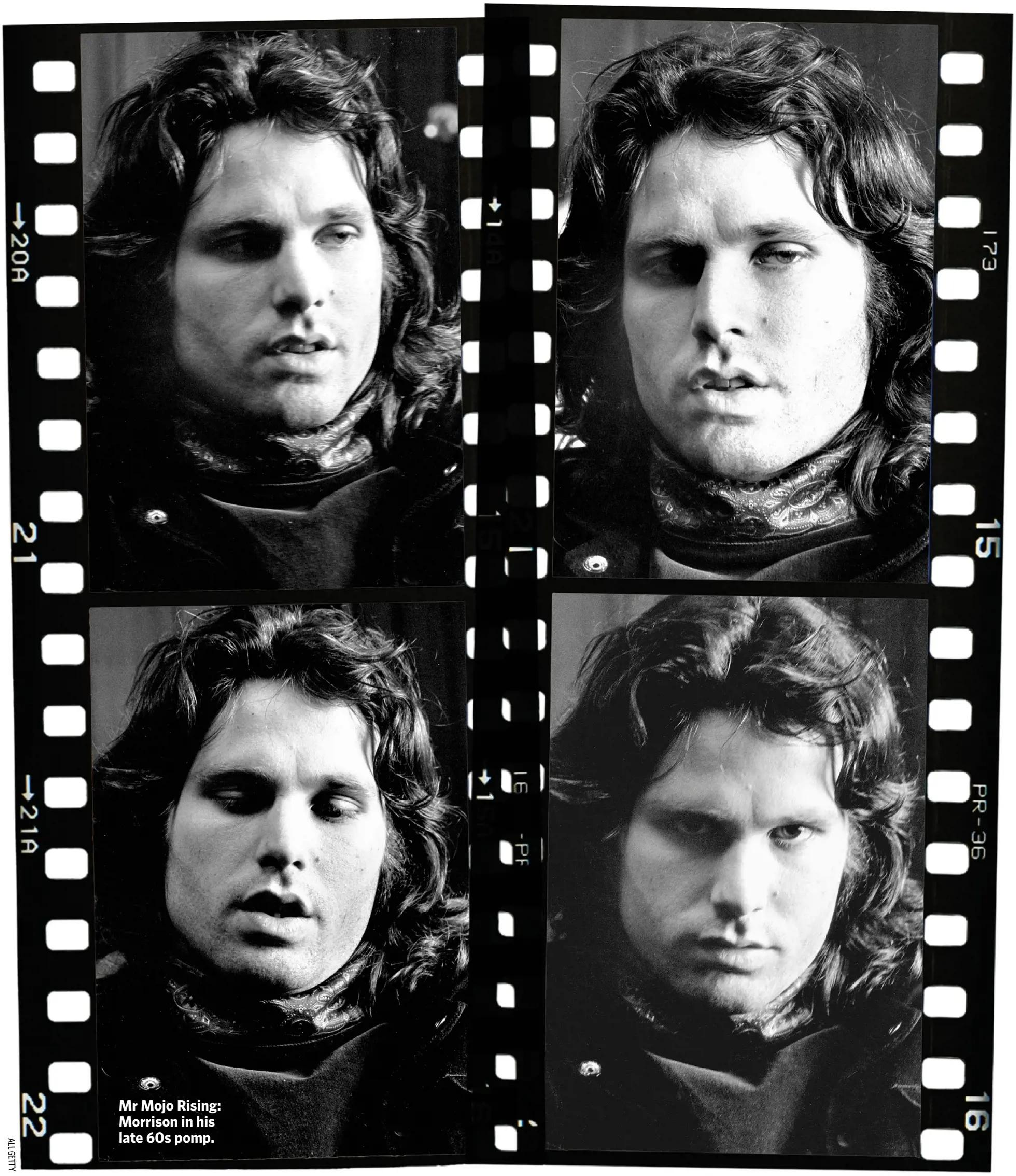
The song poem *The Wasp (Texas Radio And The Big Beat)* with its marching band rhythm and phased drum break was another adaptation from 1968 and had often been played live before recording took place. Usually, *Texas Radio* was used as the prelude to *Peace Frog*, from *Morrison Hotel*, or as part of a medley – a moment of hiatus between *When The Music's Over, Celebration Of The Lizard* and *The End*. Jim was as proud of the lyric as anything he'd written and included the poem inside the 1968 tour programme. According to Krieger, "*The WASP* was about the new music Jim heard when his family were moving around the South West States in the 1960s. He got this vision of a huge radio tower spewing out noise… This was when Wolfman Jack was on XERB, out of Rosarito Beach, in Mexico, blasting out 250,000 watts of soul power. He saturated the airwaves – you could hear him from Tijuana to Tallahassie up to Chicago where Ray lived. There were no laws about how powerful a radio station could be. That started rock'n'roll for my generation."

Morrison – the WASP, the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant in the song – had been a Wolfman fanatic. "My adolescence coincided with rock'n'roll although I never went to any concerts," he said. "In my head I heard a whole concert with a band and singing and a large audience. I was taking notes at a fantastic rock concert that only existed inside my head."

The Doors used a bass on every track, except *L'America*. Botnick hired the seasoned Jerry Scheff, who had just finished a stint with Elvis Presley at the International Hotel in Las Vegas. Morrison, a Presley fanatic, was delighted. So was drummer Densmore. "Jerry was incredible; an in-the-pocket man. He allowed me to communicate rhythmically with Morrison, and he slowed Ray down, when his right hand on the keyboards got too darn fast."

In December Botnick persuaded the Doors to hire young Texan Marc Benno as rhythm guitar foil to Krieger. Benno would play on four numbers. "Morrison was a nice guy who was on a roll," he said. "He reminded me of a wild gorilla at the sessions. He had a hand-held microphone and a telephone book full of songs. One day he stopped the session and took me to lunch. He ordered ox tails and drank Jack Daniel's out of the bottle. When we got back Jim had me show Robby a lick I was playing, and we used it on *L.A. Woman*.

"From there, it was a jam right through the album. We worked the tunes up on the spot, and did very few takes. We never saw anyone but each other, which kept distractions to a minimum, and kept Jim from feeling inhibited,



Mr Mojo Rising: Morrison in his late 60s pomp.

ALL GETTY

which I don't think was a problem for him, anyway! He cut loose completely while recording, and the result was a very spontaneous album."

In the second week of December the band held what they called "the blues day". After knocking off John Lee Hooker's *Crawling King Snake*, a regular in the repertoire in their 1967 club dates, Morrison delighted everyone with *Been Down So Long*, its title borrowed from Richard Farina's similarly named novel. He set it inside a prison. The prospect of spending six months banged up in Florida's Dade County Jail East Wing – a notorious 'hell-hole in paradise' – didn't fill him with delight. Yet, that was where he would end up if the aftermath of the Miami trial went wrong. When he sang *'Warden, warden, warden, won't you throw away your lock and key?/Come along here mister, let the poor be'*, he meant every word.

Then there was *Cars Hiss By My Window*, with Morrison's wah-wah guitar impersonation. Manzarek: "*Cars…* was brand new; a week old maybe. Jim said it was about living in Venice [Beach], in a hot room, with a hot girlfriend, and an open window, and a bad time. It could have been about Pamela Courson." Certainly, the lines *'Can't hear my baby, though I call and call'* seemed to reference Pam, who was now living in Paris, hopelessly embroiled in heroin.

On that blues roll, the song *L.A. Woman* completed the session. Lyrically, Morrison was inspired here by Los Angeles novelist John Rechy, whose 1963 novel *City Of Night* was a college favourite, and 1940s writer John Fante, who described Hollywood in love-hate lines like: 'So fuck you, Los Angeles, fuck your palm trees, and your high-assed women, and your fancy streets… Los Angeles, give me some of you! Los Angeles come to me the way I came to you, my feet over your streets, you pretty town I loved you so much, you sad flower in the sand…'

Manzarek says: "*L.A. Woman* was recorded in a state of high excitement. The Doors jumped in. We dug our teeth into that song. It was all about passion and hauling ass. It felt like we were on Route 101, on the road from Bakersfield to San Francisco. You can hear our enthusiasm. Welcome to Los Angeles!"

Riders on the storm: The Doors in the studio in 1970.

ALAMY

On December 8 Morrison celebrated his 27th birthday at the Village Recorders studio in West LA, taping poetry for a solo album. He was tired and hitting the bottle. After imbibing a lot of Old Bushmills he passed out and collapsed onto a stack of equipment. Everyone laughed: Hey, that's Jim for ya!

The next day Morrison demanded the Doors hit the road to play *L.A. Woman* live. Dates in Dallas and New Orleans were arranged for the 11th and 12th. Today rare bootlegs reveal that in Texas a doomy 15-minute version of the title track was unveiled alongside *The Changeling*, where Morrison sang in a falsetto scat he'd never used before. The Texas crowd also heard *The WASP* and *Love Her Madly* – Morrison changing the lyric to *'Do you love her madly?'*. Most surprising of all was a work in progress called *Riders On The Storm*, which Densmore describes now as "unlike anything we'd ever done".

The Texas show at the Dallas State Fair Music Hall was relatively triumphant. Morrison is drunk and sounds like he's going through a private hell, but he is coherent. Stoned immaculate. But if Mr. Mojo was barely risin' then, in Louisiana he didn't get up at all. The gig at the Warehouse, New Orleans, was a fiasco. It was the last live show the band ever gave. The music was over.

Manzarek recalls: "He just lost his energy completely. He was so dissipated. His voice got lower and lower and he ground to a halt. He was empty. This wasn't like when he comes to the studio wasted and can't deliver, but then there's always tomorrow – and by God he will deliver. This was final."

Drummer Densmore agrees. "His life-force was gone. He was so out of it. That was a depressing experience." Doors road manager Vince Treanor looked on from the wings. "He was very drunk. They finished with *Light My Fire* and Jim was hanging on the microphone trying to sing. He sat on the drum platform and didn't come back in for his vocal. Finally John kicked him and he got up and mumbled 'Yeah… yeah…' then he picked the mic up high and smashed the entire stand through the floor… Walked off stage and that was show over. John got up and said 'Right, that's it, I'm not playing anymore' and he walked off leaving Ray and Robby there."

With a tentative booking for four shows at Madison Square Garden in January cancelled, thanks to Jim's Louisiana meltdown, as a mark of contrition he returned to the studio the next week to finish *Riders On The Storm*. After looking at the lyric, Bruce Botnick played him the old Stan Jones pop song *Ghost Riders In The Sky*. Yet Morrison already had the key line, which he'd nicked from poet Hart Crane, who had written of 'Delicate riders of the storm' in his work *Praise For An Urn*.

No one knew then but *Riders On The Storm* was Jim Morrison penning his own epitaph. According to Manzarek: "He adapted the song from his script for the movie *HWY*. It was about a hitchhiker, a killer who hijacks a blue Mustang in Joshua Tree desert. Jim was obsessed with *HWY*, which he made with a bunch of his UCLA cronies." Footage from the project is used in the new Doors documentary, *When You're Strange*. "Never finished it. Great photography though from Paul Ferrara," says Manzarek. "After 10 minutes of coherent shooting the four of them got totally wasted on Cannabinol, a heavy pill version of marijuana. Paul told me they lost it afterwards and tripped back to Los Angeles. Anyhow, it gave Morrison the lyric for the last song he ever sang on planet Earth with the Doors. An insane killer, a lunatic, he's going to do something bad. Give him a ride, why don't you? But when the end comes you realise Jim's singing a beautiful, romantic song: *'Girl you gotta love your man/Take him by the hand/Make him understand/The world on you depends/Our life will never end…'* He was singing that for Pam."

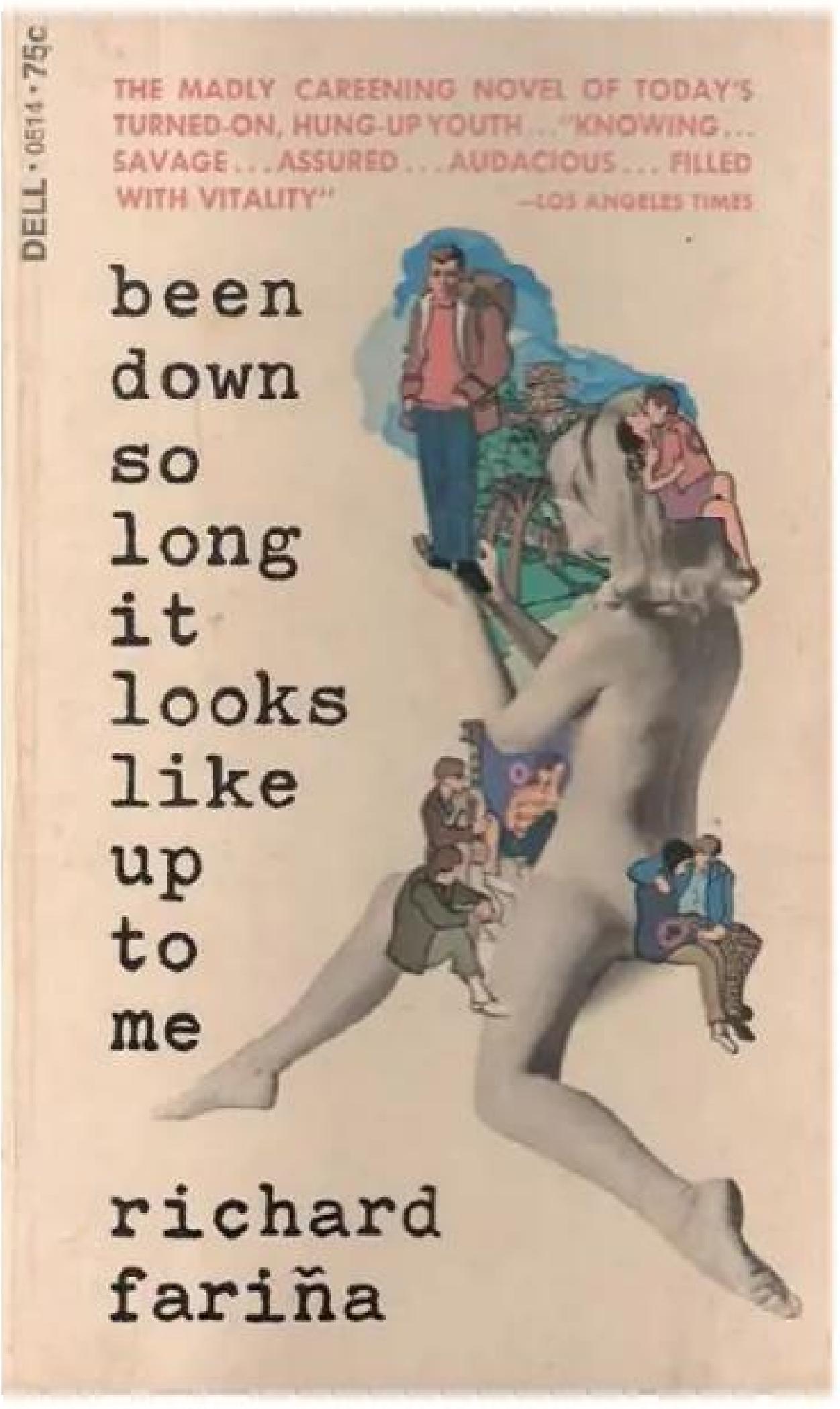
In January, during the hottest temperatures ever recorded in that month in California, the Doors and Botnick moved into Poppi Studios, Motown's West Coast complex, to mix the album. Morrison added a harmony vocal to *Hyacinth House* and, having suggested to Botnick that they use a thunderstorm sound effect as an opener for *Riders On The Storm*, he climaxed the final number with an eerie vocal whisper that was his last recorded contribution to the band.

Elektra boss Jac Holzman turned up during the final mixing. On hearing the album he broke down in tears. His most beloved charges had delivered after all. Now they were out of contract. Elektra's gold standard group, the biggest band in America, owed him no more.

With *L.A. Woman* finished and the title agreed, the Doors convened for the cover photo shoot. Morrison sat down on a stool, hunched, an unseen bottle of

Irish whiskey at his feet. Manzarek: "In that photo you can see the impending demise of Jim Morrison. He was sitting down because he was drunk. A psychic would have known that guy is on the way out. There was a great weight on him. He wasn't the youthful poet I met on the beach at Venice."

The album's art designers, Wendell Hamick and Carl Cossick, were outside the Elektra family that oversaw previous Doors products. They came up with an idea for a rounded corner cover and a cellophane window. Behind that was a yellow inner sleeve showing a woman crucified on an electricity pole. The album was released in April 1971. It hit the Top 10 a few weeks later.


THE MADLY CAREENING NOVEL OF TODAY'S TURNED-ON, HUNG-UP YOUTH... "KNOWING... SAVAGE... ASSURED... AUDACIOUS... FILLED WITH VITALITY" —LOS ANGELES TIMES
DELL · 0614 · 75c
been down so long it looks like up to me
richard fariña

The book that gave Morrison the song title of one of *L.A. Woman*'s bluesiest tracks.

During the making of *L.A. Woman*, Morrison's partner Pamela Courson went to Paris and stayed with Count Jean de Breteuil, a wealthy socialite with a penchant for blondes, violence against women and horrendous heroin abuse. Breteuil met Courson in Morocco when she was buying clothes for her boutique, Themis, on North La Cienega. Jim paid for Themis with his *Strange Days* royalty cheque. He wanted to call it 'Fucking Great'. Though he posed, awkwardly, wearing Pam's flamboyant garb, Morrison detested the people who hung out with his girl. In the song *Love Street* he sang '*She has robes and she has monkeys, lazy, diamond-studded flunkeys.*' The original rhyme was 'junkies'.

Pam, a junkie herself, returned to Jim for a tempestuous Christmas then went back to Paris to renew her relationship with the Count on February 14. Morrison was now talking about moving to France himself. He'd tired of being a rock star and wanted to escape. His attorney, Max Fink, warned Morrison that if Miami turned nasty he'd have his passport confiscated. A tactical exit from the USA was a good idea.

While Courson was strung out on the Left Bank, Morrison started taking more cocaine. He chain smoked Marlboros and Gauloises, and became more addicted to hard liquor. He hung out with fellow Southerner Steve Stills at the Crosby, Stills & Nash house on Shady Oaks. He and Stills shared a Florida military brat background. Jim's father had served in the US Navy aboard a warship in the Gulf of Tonkin. Stills' old man wasn't far away.

"I SAW THIS LARGE GUY, LIKE ORSON WELLES' SON. I THOUGHT, 'HOLY FUCK! THIS IS JIM?'"
PAUL ROTHCHILD

Jac Holzman saw Jim for the last time at an Elektra Records party to show off a new studio complex on March 3. "He was unusually quiet. I could feel finality hanging in the air." The party retired to the Blue Boar restaurant. "Jim was half there, half somewhere else," Holzman recalled. "As we left, we said our goodbyes to him. We'd enjoyed a lifetime together in the concentrated blazing arc of rock'n'roll. Jim and I hugged each other, and then he turned somewhat awkwardly and walked away."

A few days later Paul Rothchild was at Elektra on business. "I heard the door open and felt this large man entering. I didn't recognise him. Then I was tapped on the shoulder, and I turned around and this large person who looked like Orson Welles' younger son, said 'Hi, Paul'. I said to myself 'Holy fuck! This is Jim?'"

On the eve of his flight to Paris, Jim drove to the airport with friends. He got so smashed he missed the plane, and travelled out the following day, flying TWA Ambassador Class. Reunited with Courson they moved into the fabulous Hotel George V, which he said "looks like a red-plush whorehouse". The couple then moved to L'Hotel, Rue des Beaux-Arts, a funkier establishment favoured by Mick Jagger.

Courson found them a lavishly furnished third floor, three-bedroom apartment in the Marais district, 17 Rue Beautreillis, owned by a French model and starlet Elizabeth Lariviere. That week Morrison picked up a copy of *Newsweek*, which ran a cover story – 'War Against The White Death' – about the flood of heroin in Europe and America, much of it arriving via Paris and Marseille. By coincidence, director William Friedkin was finishing his smack movie *The French Connection*, days before Morrison's arrival. It was no secret: Paris was awash with heroin, nowhere more so than in the rock clubs.

A 21-year-old war photographer called Patrick Chauvel was working as a part-time barman at one such venue – the Rock'n'Roll Circus, on the Left Bank. "I saw Jim Morrison many times at the club. He was rarely on his own," he says today from his home in Paris. "He'd come in and sit on a couch, separate to the other clientele. He didn't dance or make a big noise. I remember him coming in once three nights in a row. He came often and there were times when I didn't see him but it was a big club on two floors, full of French stars – he wasn't the only big star in the club. He was interested in my friend Sky, a half-breed American Apache. They had things in common: [they both spoke English], Sky's dad was Scottish, the Vietnam War – Sky was a deserter – and the Indians. Sky said Jim was writing a poem about him, about the fact Sky's father died in a car crash leaving the family to go back to the reservation in Tucson, Arizona. Jim wanted to replace Sky in Vietnam so he could get an honorable discharge. He was fascinated by the Indian's story."

Chauvel doesn't believe Morrison was in the club to buy drugs. "He didn't need to buy in there. I never saw him take drugs but he was always alcoholised, heavy on his words, a bit emotional. He'd be silent then he'd get up and say something really loud. You could see in his eyes, he had something important he wanted to say with a lot of energy, but it wouldn't get past his mouth. It went through his eyes for a moment. That was it. He was fed up. He was not in a good place."

Chauvel recalls seeing Morrison at the Circus with a blonde girl, not red-headed Pamela. "There were other girls at his table who'd gather round him but he came in with this blonde often. They took photos, always Jim on the couch, in the same space." (The nightclub manager, Sam Bernett, thinks the blonde may have been French-Canadian – which would make Robin Wertle, Jim and Pam's 19-year old assistant, a good bet.)

As for the narcotics scene, Chauvel equates it with the times. "A lot of drugs, yes, a very free time for sex, a lot of jealousy and tension. The nightclub scene was heavy – gangsters and very bad cops. There were a lot of fistfights inside, which wound up on the stairs and in the street. There was a gunfight outside the club. I used to carry a bayonet for protection. Crazy but necessary. There was a triangle of these places – the Circus/Alcazar, La Bulle and Le Sherwood – big places in the same area. All heavy."

Morrison lived a dual life: poet by day, obliterated by night. Moving to Paris hadn't liberated him. For two weeks Pam and Jim shared the apartment before Lariviere split for St. Tropez with boyfriend Philip Dalecky, a drinking buddy of Jim's. Morrison's health was poor. He was suffering lingering pneumonia. He became asthmatic. He was prone to violent hiccups. To escape the Parisian damp, the two young Americans decided to catch some sunshine. In April they traveled to Toulouse, visiting Andorra, Madrid, Granada and Morocco, where Jim had enjoyed the July climate a year earlier with Doors publicist Leon Barnard.

On their return, May 3, Morrison seemed happy. He'd lost weight and regained strength. He and Pam enjoyed being tourists, shooting Super-8 home movies. That mood didn't last long. Jim was often alone in the apartment now since Pam and the Count were, allegedly, seeing a lot of each other. True to form, Jim looked for new buddies. He still frequented the Rock'n'Roll Circus and L'Alcazar, semi-exclusive dives by the Seine, patronised by the Stones, Hendrix, Led Zeppelin and whichever rocker was in town. Largely unnoticed, Morrison would prop up the bar – a bottle of vodka in tow. Club manager Sam Bernett claimed, "Every time Morrison came in he was high, or drunk; in an abnormal state".

Here on May 7 a young Frenchman called Gilles Yepremian came across Morrison being evicted from the Circus by the bouncers, after he sunk too much whiskey and rearranged the furniture. "He was totally drunk. Nobody recognised him," says Gilles. "I got a taxi and we drove down the Seine. At the lights Jim saw some policemen and he rolled down the window and shouted, 'Fuck the pigs!' so the driver kicked us out. I got another taxi and Jim was so pleased he tried to tip the man hundreds of francs. He was laughing uncontrollably. I didn't know where he lived so I took him to the apartment of my friend Hervé Muller."

Muller and his girlfriend Yvonne Fuka opened the door to find Morrison lurching in his face. "Hervé! Meet Jim Morrison. He'll have to stay with you." Morrison fell on Muller's bed. They left him, passed out.

The following afternoon Morrison took his new pals to the bar Alexander where he downed Bloody Marys and an entire bottle of Chivas Regal. He insulted nearby diners and became increasingly abusive. Gilles: "When he was sober he just looked like an American student on holiday. Very quiet and shy. Once he became drunk he was a madman."

In May, Morrison and Pamela had dinner chez Muller. "Play a record if you want," young Hervé told Morrison. Jim settled on Buffy Sainte-Marie. Later he and Pam were so taken with the Corsican wine Fuka served they said, "Let's go there!" They travelled to Marseilles again, where Morrison lost his passport and wallet. They waited two days for a replacement passport then flew to Ajaccio. On return they stayed at L'Hotel briefly before moving back to the apartment. Pam hired them 19-year old French-Canadian Robin Wertle. "Neither Jim nor Pamela spoke French," said Wertle. "My job included everything from getting a cleaning lady, typing letters, calling America, buying furniture, a typewriter for Jim, and making arrangements for him to show his films."

He never did.

Back in Paris, Morrison described his adventures to old friends Frank and Kathy Lisciandro, and suggested they visit: "There's a room for you here." He sent his attorney Max Fink a postcard of Moroccan scenes. "Dear Max, it's a beautiful spring in the 'City of Love'. Just got back from Spain, Morocco & Corsica – Napoleon's birthplace. Take a vacation! The women are great & the food is gorgeous. Love, Jim x."

In late May, Morrison called John Densmore, expressing delight at his copy of *L.A. Woman*. "He'd just got the finished album," recalls Densmore. "Jim told me what a great place Paris was, and he said he was definitely coming back to LA. He didn't know when. He said good things about the band… He sounded happier than when he left."

Morrison resumed an acquaintanceship with Jacques Demy and his wife Agnes Varda, leading lights in the cinematic French New Wave. "We had a common friend in Alain Ronay," says Varda, who has seldom spoken in depth about Jim until now. "We saw the Doors in Los Angeles in 1967 when Jacques was filming *The Model Shop*," recalls Varda from her Parisian home. "In 1970 he'd visited the set for my film *Lions Love* – he appears briefly." Alain Ronay was someone knew was a student at the UCLA Film School in 1964; the older man was a post-graduate. Jim also turned up on set with Ronay for Demy's film *Peau D'Ane* (Donkey Skin).

During that initial visit to Paris, Morrison went to a birthday party for Varda's 10-year-old daughter Rosalie. "I think he liked us because we never asked him for anything," says Agnes. "He was drunk that afternoon; drunk but happy. He drank a lot of brandy. Other times I saw him in my courtyard.

"He used to visit us and eat. He sat in my yard for many hours. Didn't talk much. Didn't like to gossip. I never even took his photograph. His wish in Paris was to write poems.

"I wasn't like a private friend where he'd come and have dinner on his own. It was always in company. He sat in my kitchen in what's supposed to be his time of craziness – he was OK. I didn't bother him, and I wasn't constantly bothered about him."

In June, Jim and Pam flew to London, staying at the Hyde Park Hotel, which they hated. Pam resumed her liaison with the Count, who had the keys to Keith Richards' and Anita Pallenberg's house in Cheyne Walk, where the smack flowed while Keith was away in Nellcôte, South of France, starting the sessions for *Exile On Main St*. The Count was now juggling between Pamela, Jean Paul Getty Junior's wife Talitha, and Marianne Faithfull. In her autobiography, Faithfull describes de Breteuil as "a horrible guy, someone who had crawled out from under a stone. Somehow I ended up with him… It was all about drugs and sex".

In London, Morrison met up with McClure. He recalled a riotous evening "in the Soho clubs. The Bobbies busted us for being drunk and disorderly. Finally we decided to take a taxi to the Lake District, and got busted again. I guess taking a taxi all that way isn't done ordinarily".

Morrison invited Alain Ronay to London. "I moved them to the Cadogan Hotel, near Sloane Square," says Ronay, who now lives in Los Angeles. "It was a happy time. No paparazzi. I never saw Jim sign one autograph. We went to the theatre, did all the usual things. I returned with them to Paris and moved into the apartment. Pam had her own life entirely. She wasn't always around, but for the whole of June I lived with Morrison, practically 24 hours a day. I won't deny he was a dark and complicated person, or that Pam was a basket case. But strike the fact that Jim was despondent, or drug addicted, or terminally depressed. He was living his dream, and that had nothing to do with rock. He was delighted at the success of *L.A. Woman*, but his pleasure lay elsewhere."

> "HE WAS LIKE A SHY STUDENT ON HOLIDAY. BUT ONCE DRUNK HE WAS A MADMAN."
>
> ***GILLES YEPREMIAN***

Even so Morrison must have been getting studio withdrawal symptoms since on June 15 he hooked up with two American street musicians who met he after sinking whiskey at the Café de Flore. Jim persuaded the buskers, who were crucifying Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young's *Marrakesh Express*, to join him at a local jingle studio where they recorded a few drunken rambles including Morrison's poetic ode to Pamela, *Orange County Suite*. The engineer gave Jim the tape box on which he scribbled a band name, Jomo and the Smoothies. *The Lost Paris Tapes*, as they became known, ended up in a white plastic bag from La Samaritaine department store which Morrison left at Phil Dalecky's apartment but never retrieved.

One mid-June day, with Paris sweltering in a heat wave, Morrison collected kindling wood from the courtyard at Beautreillis for the fireplace. Carrying it upstairs with Ronay, he was soon out of breath. "What's up with you?" Ronay recalls saying, "I'm 10 years older than you, and I'm not having a problem".

Morrison laughed the incident off, but was sweating heavily. He had started coughing up blood again so, at Pam's insistence, he revisited an American doctor. He renewed a prescription for the treatment of pneumonia and respiratory problems.

In the final weeks of his life, Jim and Pam's relationship reached breaking point. Faux suicidal, Pam often spent nights with the Count while sharing her saner moments bullying Morrison over his lack of writing activity. Morrison wasn't ready to admit defeat. He wrote to Elektra's business director Bob Greene on June 28. "Paris is beautiful in the sun, an exciting town, built for human beings. Speaking to Bill [Siddons] a while back I told him of our desire to stay here indefinitely." Pamela had plans to buy an old property, maybe a disused church, where Jim could stop being a rock star and become a poet. Morrison asked Greene "for a sort of financial statement in general? Also a copy of the partnership agreement, if it was ever completed."

Funds running out, he told Greene to turn over Themis to the trust of Pam's sister and her husband – "we'd like to be completely clear of any involvement" – to organise new credit cards – "we could use them made out in both our names" – and to send a cheque for $3000. "House bills are catching up." Touchingly he also asked Greene to make sure his dog Sage was well looked after. "Send Judy [Pam's sister] 100 bucks for the dog." It didn't sound like Jim had any plans to return to California at all.

Jim loved going to the bookshops like Shakespeare And Company near Notre Dame. He was fascinated by the atmosphere of unrest in a Paris still recovering from the riots of 1968. He wrote brief verses, often sitting on a bench in the tranquil Place des Vosges – his favourite haunt. In *The Sidewalkers Moved*, composed a few days before his death, he wrote 'Join us at the demonstration'.

Jim, Pam and Ronay spent June 28 in Chantilly; they had lunch at Hotel de l'Oise, where Ronay took the last known pictures of the singer. In one he's hugging Pam. In another he gives Ronay his best lop-sided grin. "An idyllic day," says Ronay. Back in Paris that night Pam got hold of more heroin. She later told friends that Jim started experimenting with the drug to keep her company, "snorting lines off his credit card".

On July 1 Morrison was spotted by an American fan dining alone, drinking white wine and munching a croque monsieur in the bar Le Mazet after he and Pam had a blazing row in a neighbourhood restaurant near Beautreillis, witnessed by two German students who shared their table.

Herve Muller hadn't seen Jim since they went to a performance of Robert Wilson's en vogue play, *Le Regard Du*

CAST OF CHARACTERS

PARIS

ALAIN RONAY
CLOSE FRIEND OF JIM'S WHO SPENT SEVERAL WEEKS LIVING WITH MORRISON IN PARIS

AGNES VARDA
BELGIAN-BORN FILM DIRECTOR OF THE *RIVE GAUCHE* SCHOOL, ALSO A FRIEND OF RONAY AND JIM

HERVE MULLER AND GILLES YEPREMIAN
JIM'S FRENCH FRIENDS

COUNT JEAN DE BRETEUIL
INTERNATIONAL PLAYBOY AND DEALER AND SOMETIME LOVER OF COURSON AND ALSO OF...

MARIANNE FAITHFULL
LONDON-BORN SINGER AND STONES-RELATED LEGEND

SAM BERNETT
MANAGER OF THE ROCK'N'ROLL CIRCUS IN PARIS WHO DISCOVERED MORRISON DEAD IN THE REST ROOMS OF THE CLUB

PATRICK CHAUVEL
BARMAN AT THE CIRCUS. NOW A FAMOUS WAR PHOTOGRAPHER

ROBIN WERTLE
THE 'SECRETAIRE' TO JIM AND PAM

GETTY

17 Rue Beautreillis, Jim's last home.

JOHN WOOLFORD

Sourd (Deaf Man's Glance), at Theatre de la Musique on June 11. Muller recalls that Ronay turned up during the interval and they left the theatre with Morrison. They retired to a cocktail bar called Rosebud, where Morrison was hassled by fans, moved on to La Coupole then to Pam's druggy haunts in Saint Germain accompanied by two flamboyant gentlemen – "minets bizarres" – before Morrison and Pam spent the small hours drinking at Café de Flore, Les Deux Magots, and Brasserie Lipp, with various debauched socialites.

Muller never saw Morrison again. He did phone the singer's apartment around midday on July 3, however. "A rather strange sounding Ronay answered the phone," Herve recalled in his book *Jim Morrison Au-Dela des Doors*. "He said Jim and Pam have gone away for the weekend. And yet Jim Morrison had already been dead, apparently, for four or five hours, in a hot bath."

Ronay thinks Muller may have called a day earlier. Morrison said he didn't want visitors. "So many people have exploited their liaisons; like that awful journalist [Tere Tereba] who bumped into Jim once at La Coupole restaurant, and suddenly she's writing detailed dialogue about their supper ["chocolate mousse for the ladies, please"] – it's nonsense."

Having spent most of five weeks living with Jim, Ronay moved out of the apartment and into a room at Agnes Varda's house on Rue Daguerre, where the filmmaker was working on dialogue for the script of *Last Tango In Paris* with director Bernardo Bertolucci. The film, starring Marlon Brando, released in 1972, about an American exiled – and dying – in Paris was, some said later, influenced by the Morrison story.

On the morning of Friday July 2 Morrison and Ronay walked in the Marais. Morrison bought Pamela jewellery. They ate at Ma Bourgogne, a restaurant specialising in the rich food of Alsace, where Morrison's hiccoughing fits returned. Jim called at the cobblers to collect some boots. Despite Ronay's insistence that Jim was not despondent he was agitated. After beers at Café de Phare, Ronay left for a dinner date with Varda. Morrison begged him to stay: "One more short beer! C'mon. Do it for an old friend." Ronay agreed. Morrison's hiccups were raging now. Ronay looked at Jim alive for the last time in the Place de la Bastille. He saw a face like a death mask. Sensing his stare, Morrison asked: "Well – what did you see?"

At Varda's house, Ronay recounted his unsettling afternoon. They went for dinner around the time Jim and Pam supposedly went to eat a Chinese meal. Ronay had recommended the couple go to see the film *Pursued*, a Freudian Western set in New Mexico, starring Robert Mitchum, about a young boy whose family is wiped out.

What happened in the hours between Ronay's departure that late afternoon, and the eventual death of Jim Morrison now becomes a mystery. At 5.40pm, the following day, July 3, Pamela gave her official statement to policeman Jacques Manchez, via Ronay's on the spot translation. The previous evening, she told Manchez, she felt ill, so Morrison dined alone in 'Le Quattier' Rue Saint-Antoine where he apparently ate sweet and sour Chinese washed down with plenty of beers. When he returned they – or maybe just Jim – went to the cinema Action Lafayette to see *La Vallee de la Peur*/aka *Death Valley*/aka *Pursued*.

Much to Morrison's annoyance the movie was badly sub-titled. Bored and opiated, Jim returned around 1am, July 3. As usual they built a fire – despite the warmth of the night. Jim started drinking whiskey. He tried to write at his desk, in the spiral-bound reporters pad that will become known as his last French Notebook. For the third day in a row he sniffed heroin off a mirror. He and Pam watched a sequence of their on-the-road-in-Europe Super-8 cine movies. Pam tells Manchez: "My friend [not once in her statement does she refer to Jim by name] appeared healthy and seemed very happy – but I noticed there was something not quite right about him. Later we played some records that I found in the bedroom and we played music for two hours lying on the bed… I think we fell asleep about 2.30 but I can't say when exactly. The record player turned itself off."

Manchez asks: "Did you have sex with the deceased?"

Pam replies: "No, we didn't have sex last night. About 3.30am, I think – there isn't a clock in the bedroom – my friend wakes me with the noise of his breathing. He was so noisy I got the impression he must need help. I wanted to help my friend. I asked him, did he want a doctor? No. He said he was OK, and he was going to take a hot bath. He got in the bath and then he called me because he felt sick… I took him in an orange saucepan, and my friend threw up the meal he'd eaten and I noticed… some blood clots.

"He is sick three times. Third time it' s just blood… I tipped the pan into the basin… then I washed it. Now my friend says he feels strange. 'But I don't feel ill enough for you to call me a doctor. I feel better now… It's over… Go to bed!' he tells me… 'I'm gonna stay in the bath, and I'll be in with you later'.

"I thought he seemed better, because he'd been sick, and his colour had returned, so I went back to bed feeling reassured. I don't know when I went back to sleep, but I woke up later and realised my friend wasn't in bed with me. I ran to the bathroom and saw he was still in the bath with his head back as if asleep. He had blood round his nostrils. I thought he must be ill, or he's unconscious. I tried to pull him out of the bath but it was impossible for me. At that point I called Mr Ronay and he came with Mrs Agnes Demy [aka Varda], and they called the police station for me."

That was Pam's statement. What she didn't tell the police, but *did* tell Ronay was this: Jim returns and listens to Doors albums, fixating on one particular song – *Not To Touch The Earth* (from the album *Waiting For The Sun*, which references the death of John F. Kennedy). The couple take more heroin. Jim carries on drinking. At 3am the couple start nodding out on the 86% pure smack that's slithering through the French underground scene.

If Pam's testimony to the police is to be believed, she is woken by Morrison's coughing fit. He runs a bath. The vomiting. The sleep. As dawn breaks, Pamela wakes to realise that Morrison is still in the bathroom. In an awful reminder of the *Cars Hiss By My Window* lyric – *'Can't hear my baby, though I call and call'* – she thinks she hears him cry out, "Pamela – are you there?" On finding him in the bath, Pam realises Jim Morrison is either dead or dying. She calls Ronay and Varda, and possibly, Count Jean de Breteuil.

Until recently, these have been the accepted versions of events. In 2007, however, Sam Bernett, a French-born former *New York Times* journalist and author of several books on French culture, published a book that confirmed a story that had circulated around Paris for 36 years.

Bernett had been the manager of the Rock'n'Roll Circus since it opened in 1969. According to Bernett, Morrison turned up at the club around 1am and ordered a bottle of vodka. Morrison was no stranger to Bernett either.

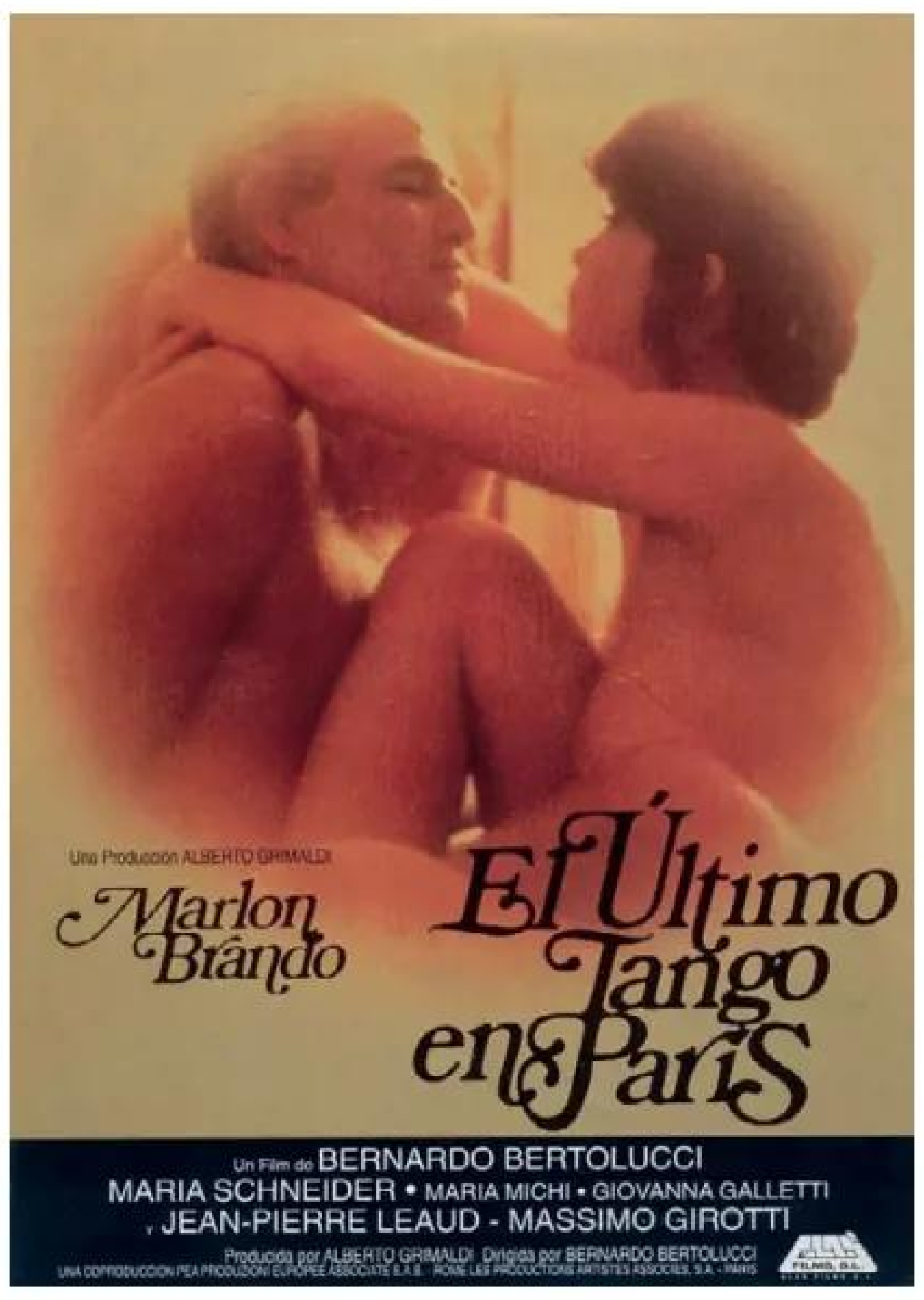
Jim Morrison contemplates "his last hitch-hike into the unknown."

ALAMY

Bernett: "I was in the club that night July 2 and Jim came in at about 1am, July 3. He was at the bar as usual. He was with some friends who I didn't know. He was expecting people to bring him some stuff for Pamela. He was often in there doing that, or going to little cafés and dealers in the streets in Saint Germain. He was waiting. He drank, talked, I listened but I wasn't always next to him. I bought him drinks. About 2am two guys came and then for 20 minutes he wasn't at the bar. He disappeared." The two men were apparently dealers connected to Jean de Breteuil. Their real names have been lost to time, but it's alleged that one was nicknamed 'Le Chinois', the other 'Le Petit Robert'.

Bernett was next alerted by the cloakroom girl on the first floor. "She was worried because one door had been locked for a long time and people were complaining they couldn't get in. They banged on the door: 'Anyone there?' No answer. So I checked with her. No answer indeed. I didn't know Jim was behind the door. I called my security guy to smash the door open and inside was Jim. Sitting on the loo with no reaction, like he's sleeping or knocked out, his trousers slightly down. He was sitting with his head forward and his arms down – like a dead guy, actually. I shook him, I looked at his face, still no reaction. He had foam on his nose and lips. I told the girl to get a doctor. I had a friend, a customer there every night – he was in the club. He came, looked at Jim and started a little check-up, then he looked at me and said, 'That guy is dead'."

Bernett made to call the emergency services but the two dealers reappeared. "'He's not dead. He's just fucked up.' [they said] 'Don't call the police, don't call his family. We take him home, we know where he lives'. I said, 'That's impossible! We have to call the police and the medical people'. 'No!' they say. 'Forget it. We'll take him and we'll use a back door'. Then the club owner's right hand man appears and confirms: 'No trouble, no police. We don't want any scandal. They'll close us down'. I said, 'You can't do that!' 'No, I'm the boss – you do what I say'. The two guys packed him up and they took him out the club through the Alcazar out to the street door opposite the Rue de Seine and the entrance to the Circus. The Alcazar had closed, the cabaret was over, apart from a few people who looked to see what was happening. They took him to the apartment. I was told this – they put him in the tub and waited an hour and a half before calling the paramedic. Pamela was in the apartment, out of her mind, screaming. Completely stoned."


Una Producción ALBERTO GRIMALDI
Marlon Brando
El Último Tango en París
Un Film de BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI
MARIA SCHNEIDER • MARIA MICHI • GIOVANNA GALLETTI
JEAN-PIERRE LEAUD • MASSIMO GIROTTI

Agnes Varda was working on the script for *Last Tango In Paris* during – and some say influenced by – Jim's stay.

> "JIM CAME IN THE CLUB TO GET SOME STUFF FOR PAMELA. HE OFTEN DID THAT."
>
> ***SAM BERNETT***

Bernett maintains his silence for 36 years, and then writes a book, *The End – Jim Morrison* (2007, Prive). Outside of France it is greeted with scepticism. But in a new interview with *Classic Rock*, Patrick Chauvel (now an award-winning war photographer – a profession that risk their lives to report the truth) bears out Bernett's version. Says Chauvel: "Jean-Marie Riviere, L'Alcazar boss and a king of the Parisian music halls and night club scene got involved. He spoke to several guys including me, and said, 'We've got a problem here'. They called in a doctor and asked us to stay around and, to make the [story] shorter, we had to take him out of there because if they find Jim Morrison dead in the club, that's the end of the club."

In his capacity as an employee, Chauvel did what he was told. "Was I scared? Hmm. It was a waste of somebody fantastic. Nobody knew about it apart from the few guys, the boss, Sam definitely, and maybe Cameron [Watson, a Parisian club DJ]. They all just wanted to keep it real quiet. It was an embarrassment so they took him via the tunnel between the clubs, which connected the cloakrooms, and up the stairs to the backstage street door. The boss was afraid of having a doctor or a newsman say anything, so they evacuated Jim, *et voila*, into the car."

And he helped? "Yes, I helped carry him in a blanket. I can't say 100% that he was dead, but he wasn't moving. That's for sure. Yeah, I thought 'This is bizarre', but I'd just come back from Vietnam. I'd seen a lot of weird things. Anyhow, he was then put into the back seat of a Mercedes. I don't know who drove the car. They took him home, is what they told me. I didn't see the car leave, no. I helped put him in and then went back inside the Circus. They wanted everything to look as normal as possible. I remember they put him into the back seat very gently and that's why I thought he might still be alive. I saw that shape, that heavy shape."

And what did Chauvel think had happened to Jim? "I heard that the guy he was used to getting drugs from had changed, been arrested or something," he says. "So Morrison got involved with a new guy that night and the heroin wasn't the same at all. It was a lot more pure, and Jim didn't know that. And he overdosed."

If this account is correct, and many in Paris believe it to be, the official Pam Courson story must be substantially fictional. Chauvel even recalls the people who assisted. "I knew most of them by sight. I remember one name: Dominique Petrolaci, a Corsican. He was the head barman and a good friend who got me my job. He shot himself shortly afterwards at a party – put a shotgun through his mouth, in front of everybody."

> 'THE TWO DEALERS REAPPEARED. "HE'S NOT DEAD, HE'S JUST FUCKED UP" THEY SAID. "WE'LL TAKE HIM HOME."'

Theories surrounding Jim's death are legion. During research for this piece a Parisian source offered the notion that Pamela wasn't in the apartment that night but was sleeping with an extremely famous (unnamed) French celebrity. But Count Jean de Breteuil was definitely spotted hanging around the street with a friend by Alain Ronay. "He looked like a ruffian," Ronay told Varda who recognised the man as well. "I wanted to spank his tailor," was Ronay's quaint appraisal.

We'll never know whether Pam was home when the men arrived with the body. What we do know is Marianne Faithfull's claim that Pamela phoned Jean de Breteuil, at around 6am. According to Faithfull's autobiography, "We were staying at L'Hotel. Suddenly Jean had to leave. He slammed out the room. He didn't come right back. He returned in the early hours very agitated. I was fucked up on Tuinals. For no reason he beat me up. I asked him, 'Did you have a good time there?' He replied: 'Get packed, we're going to Morocco.'"

Faithfull claims Jean was "scared for his life. Jim Morrison had OD'd, and he had provided the smack. He saw himself as dealer to the stars. Now he was a small time dealer in big trouble. Jean took me to Tangier. It was a disaster. We were horribly strung out. In a panic before he left Paris he got rid of all his drugs." To make matters worse, the Count had been boasting that it was he who had sold Janis Joplin the fatal heroin that killed her in October 1970.

On Saturday July 3, Jean and Marianne arrived in Marrakech and stayed with his mother at the infamous jet-setting hang out Villa Taylor. The noted musicologist Roger Steffens had dinner with them and others that evening. He described an extraordinary night in a letter to his family dated July 9. "The Countess's son, Jean, the handsome 21 year old jet-setting playboy who inherits his late father's title this November, arrived unexpectedly in Marrakech last Saturday," he wrote. "The pair had just come from two violent days in Paris, which began with an auto crash, included an attempt by Jean's best friend to slash his wrists and culminated in a call from another old girlfriend of Jean's, Pamela Courson, who was staying in Paris with her husband [sic] Jim Morrison, lead singer of the Doors. She begged Jean to rush over to her place, and when he arrived they found Morrison dead in the bathtub of an apparent overdose of drugs. All these being too much, Marianne and Jean hopped a plane for Marrakech, and a peaceful, retreating week."

Today Roger recalls: "Jean and Marianne seemed very high and spaced out as they recounted the story. They were very upset… I met Jean through his mother, the Countess de Breteuil, second wife – and first love, though a commoner – of the late Count. Jean was the apple of his mother's eye, but in reality a profligate drug-dealer who left a long trail of disasters in his wake." He certainly did – they included Talitha Getty, Pamela Courson, Jim Morrison and himself. De Breteuil died within the year in Tangier of a massive heroin overdose.

Marianne Faithfull declined to be interviewed for this story.

Alain Ronay and Agnes Varda reappear in the official story when Pamela calls them at around 8am on Saturday July 3. "Please call an ambulance. I think my Jim is dying. He is in the bath. He has blood around his nose. Please call for me."

Varda now says: "Pamela called my house and I answered. I called for the firemen – *les pompiers*. In an accident you always call them, they are the first assistance – like paramedics. I told them: 'Go right away to this address. There is a scene there where maybe someone is out of life'. Ronay gave the exact address. We went together, we arrived, and the fireman said, 'It's too late – he's already dead.' Then the doctor comes [Max Vasille, Varda's family doctor], and does what doctors do. But it was hopeless."

What do Varda and Ronay make of Bernett's account? To Ronay, "Bernett's story about the toilet is ridiculous. Check the physical probability. People would notice a body. How did they carry it out of a club onto Rue Mazarine into a taxi and up three flights of stairs without anyone seeing them? It's impossible."

Agnes Varda is even more damning. "I never read his book but I know what he says is rubbish. All I know is I saw Jim Morrison a few days before he died and he didn't look good. He was not in good shit – this I remember. Then Pamela called me in the morning and she says he doesn't look good. Alain calls me the day before and Jim's not in good shape – so it was nothing special. He wasn't well. But look: I'm not the one holding his hand. Don't ask me what other people think. Don't quote me on someone else's silly book."

Is it silly? Bernett and Chauvel don't think so."At first I didn't think the *official* story was bullshit," says Chauvel. "I thought they took him back and he died in the bath trying to get his wits together. But why send for a doctor before they carried him out? As soon as it happened they closed down the toilets and put a guy on guard and said they were broken. It was the women's toilets. I'm not the only one telling this story. I don't think there's any doubt that he did not faint in the bathtub. He was definitely there that night. There is no doubt about that.

"Next day they said, or the rumours said, they stripped him and put him in that bath tub in very hot water – very hot so the doctor who confronted the death couldn't take an accurate temperature of the body. He would make a mistake [estimating the time of death] so maybe that's true. I don't know."

Far from being a story that lay untold for over 30 years, rumours were rife in Paris, with even local papers picking up on it. "I remember a newspaper article [in *Le Parisiene*] that appeared a few days after Morrison's death," recalls Chauvel. "[It] said – rough translation – 'Jim Morrison is dead but his corpse keeps moving around'."

The first official who saw Morrison's dead body was Alain Raisson, the French fireman/paramedic. Now living in Rio, he confirms the story of his arrival at the apartment with a team of five. The body was warm, so the team hurriedly tried to revive the singer. "We carried him onto the bed to do cardiac massage," he says. "We tried to revive him and failed. It was a short, intense, very real and brief encounter." The warmth, they realised later, had come from the still-warm bath.

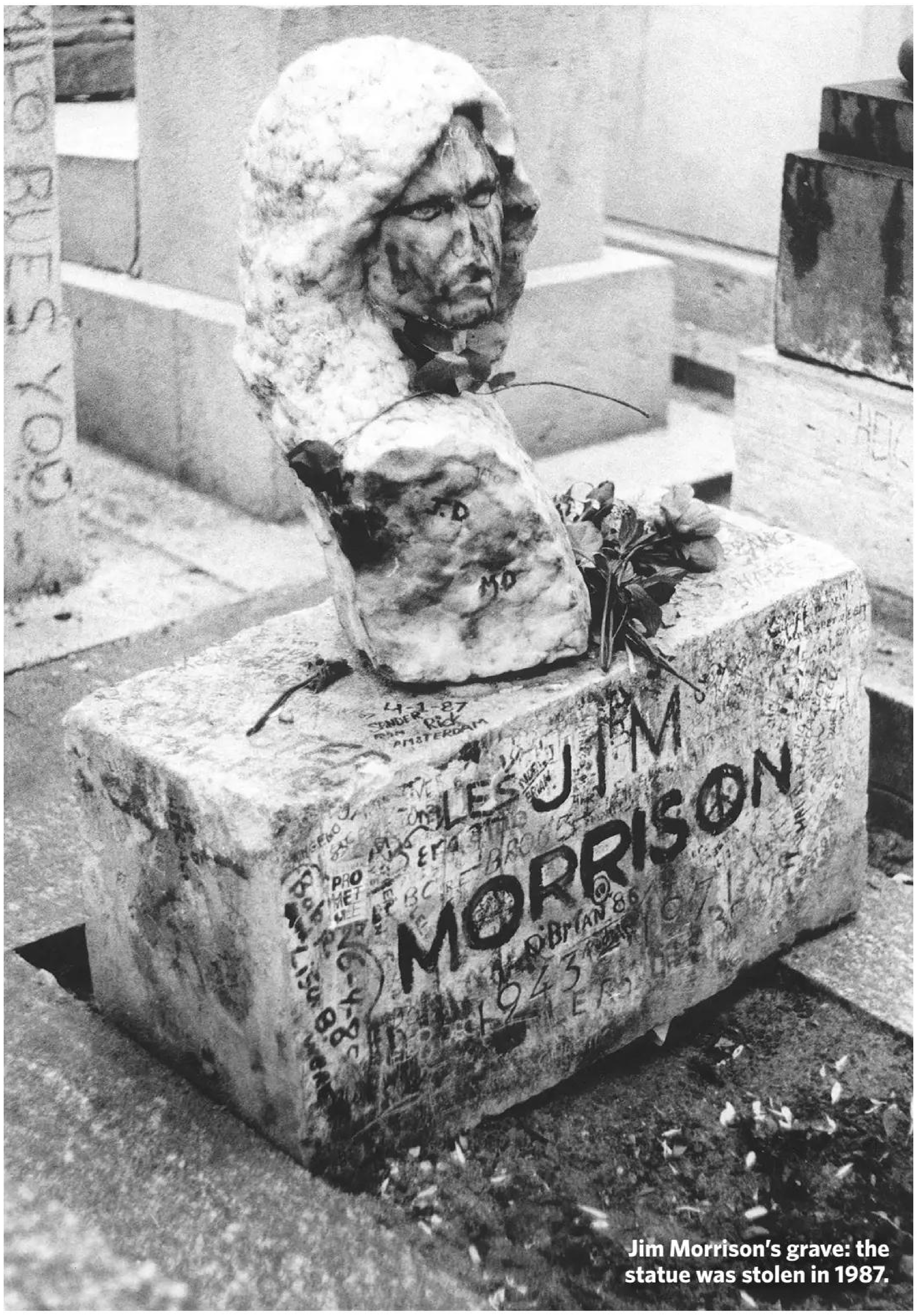
The doctor who arrived a few minutes later was amazed when told that the man dressed in a Moroccan gown was only 27. "He looks much older. I would have said a 57 year-old," the doctor exclaimed. He was happy to suggest that the patient had died of natural causes. Heart failure, possibly brought about by respiratory problems, was his verdict. No need for an autopsy.

When Bernett wrote his book he contacted Raisson and the chief paramedic. "The fireman told me he knew Morrison died much earlier. He said 'This guy's been dead for a couple of hours, at least.' The police commissioner told me the same thing. 'We knew there was something wrong with the story,' he said. 'But, look it's summertime and I'm going on vacation tomorrow.' He wanted to wrap it up quick so he signed the papers. He didn't believe the story he was told in the apartment. He said it was strange and phoney, but he let it go."

By 9am that Saturday the local police were swarming all over Rue Beautreillis and a small crowd of onlookers had gathered on the street. Courson and Ronay managed to leave the apartment on two occasions: to contact an undertaker, and to secure a Death Certificate at the Town Hall – much to the Chief of Police's annoyance. Before he arrived, Pamela managed to flush her stash of heroin down the toilet and burnt a selection of Jim Morrison's letters and notes. "Why?" she was asked later, as the grate smouldered. "They mustn't read this… this stuff," she announced, in her singsong voice.

In the small hours of July 3, some hours before the official time of death, a strange thing happened. At club La Bulle, DJ Cameron Watson made an announcement over the tannoy after being approached by two men. Cutting the music Watson called for silence. "Ladies and gentlemen, Jim Morrison has died tonight at the Rock'n'Roll Circus.' Rumours soon tore through Paris.

The Corsican mafia had killed Morrison. A Marseilles hit man had assassinated him. He'd died after a fight with the Count and his henchmen. He'd committed suicide. The CIA had given him the fatal OD. There were bloody daggers under his bath. He'd got two bullet wounds in the head. There were bruises on his body…



Jim Morrison's grave: the statue was stolen in 1987.

JOHN WOOLFORD

Amidst the conjecture, what is certain is that – rather than take the body to a morgue – Courson agreed to the French tradition of keeping Morrison's corpse in a coffin in the bedroom. Every so often an 'ice man' turned up with large blocks and canisters of dry ice to keep the body relatively fresh. "That's the way we can do it in France," says Varda. "The Spanish do it. The Jews and Arabs do it. The body is in good condition. [We did the] same with my husband Jacques Demy. We don't put it in a fridge or under the bed."

But contrary to reports that Pamela slept with Jim's body, Varda says, "Pam was not alone after Jim died. She stayed at my place and she went back to the apartment in the day. People were with her at all times. The secretaire [Robin Wertle] was there. The police and the undertaker had keys to Rue Beautreillis. When people say that Bill Siddons organised Jim's funeral at Pere Lachaise – no, he did not. I did that. I helped with all the arrangements. It wasn't easy getting a foreigner into Pere Lachaise. Anyway Jacques and I organised with Alain. The secretaire [Wertle] did nothing. I only noticed her at the funeral when I saw I was standing with another woman. There was no priest. It was all done quickly and properly. Just normal. Is it lucky to have been there? Would you love to have been there? The man was dead! I wish he were still alive. He cannot be replaced. *Voila!*"

> "JEAN DE BRETEUIL WAS SCARED FOR HIS LIFE. JIM MORRISON HAD OD'D AND HE HAD PROVIDED THE SMACK."

Ronay's twist is different again. "I buried Morrison in Pere Lachaise," he says. With deadly irony, Morrison apparently visited the cemetery at the end of June and was much taken by the artistic bent of the inhabitants. "It was my idea. I was the only person at the funeral parlour. I picked the site. I went alone. Agnes had nothing to do with it. Bill Siddons can't take credit. Can he speak French? Give me a break. Enough already. Robin Wertle? Nothing to do with it. She's disappeared. I guess like in all good mysteries she reappears later.

"Pam was contacted by Siddons. She had no money and she was losing control. Agnes was good to her. Agnes drove me to the funeral. Pam wanted Jim buried in L.A. for God's sake! What? And have bus tours stopping every two hours?"

On Monday July 5 Doors manager Bill Siddons received a call from Clive Selwood in the London Elektra office telling him, "Three journalists have called me and asked if Morrison is dead". Siddons spent six hours calling Pam, reaching her at noon. Siddons: "I told her, 'I'm a friend. I'm coming to Paris now'. It was a weird flight. I wasn't going as an official representative of the Doors; I simply went to help her. I got to the apartment on Tuesday morning while all the local workers were in the cafés drinking their coffee and brandy. Pam was alone. She was coherent but totally distraught. She'd hit the wall. I cooperated as best as I could. I was only 21. I had no tools to deal with this. We ran round the city all day. She filed a report at the American embassy [the form 'The Death of an American Citizen Abroad'] and we went to the funeral house." There was a story that he'd arranged for a more expensive white ash coffin in which to bury his friend. "That's untrue," he says.

Siddons' first impression on meeting Jim Morrison when he was the Doors teenage roadie had been, "he scared me to death". He had no desire to see his friend's body, which was now finally sealed for burial. The fact that no one from the Doors' camp saw Jim's body became one of the cornerstones of the 'Jim is alive' conspiracy theory. It's not one to which Siddons subscribes. "We buried Jim on Wednesday 7," he says. "It was morning. His body was picked up at the apartment. I travelled with Pamela and the secretary Robin Wertle to the cemetery. Ronay and Varda followed separately…" There were four unknown pallbearers. "Everyone was distraught but it was a nice little goodbye ceremony. Pam said some words. I don't remember what. [She recited some words from Morrison's poem *The Severed Garden*]. I don't know what happened to Robin. I haven't spoken to her in 20 years. She wanted nothing to do with the obsession. She was clear on that. She served Jim and Pam very well – and Jim and Pam are gone. I have a high regard for Robin. She was a class act."

None of the Doors or anyone at Elektra was invited to the funeral. "But that's not weird at all," says Siddons, who released a statement on Thursday, July 8 after flying back with Pamela to Los Angeles. "We – *I* – wanted the funeral low-key. I saw what happened with Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin. Jim was buried with the respect and consideration he deserved as a great poet and artist. I don't know about the theories surrounding Jim's death. All I know is Pam told me he died of a heart attack. She simply said, 'I went to check on him… and he was no longer with us.'"

Back in LA, the remaining Doors heard the news via Siddons' telephone call. Ray Manzarek says, "In one way I wasn't surprised at all. Jim broke the circle. When I heard he was dead I said, 'See! That'll teach yer – you can't burn the candle at both ends!' Yeah, I thought his excesses would do him in. Of course we were devastated. We went into the studio the next day to work. It was security. It was like my brother had died."

James Douglas Morrison's final notebook contained the harrowing message: 'Last words, Last words. Out'. Also a chilling self-assessment: 'Regret for wasted nights & wasted years – I pissed it all away – American Music.'

July 3, 1971. Paris. It was to be Jim Morrison's last hitchhike into the unknown.

Thanks and gratitude to Gilles Yepremian for his selfless assistance. And to the Freedom Man, for the Dallas CD.

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And then there were three: Robby Krieger, Ray Manzarek and John Densmore elected to continue without Jim Morrison.

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When The Music's Over

The death of Jim Morrison in 1971 looked like it marked the end of the road for The Doors, but his surviving bandmates had other ideas. This is the story of the band's strange afterlife.

Words: **Rob Hughes**

The lizard king is dead, long live The Doors. It's August 1971, barely a month after Jim Morrison's demise, and his surviving bandmates are putting the finishing touches to their first album without him. You might politely call this an act of professionalism. In less charitable terms, it could easily appear plain cold.

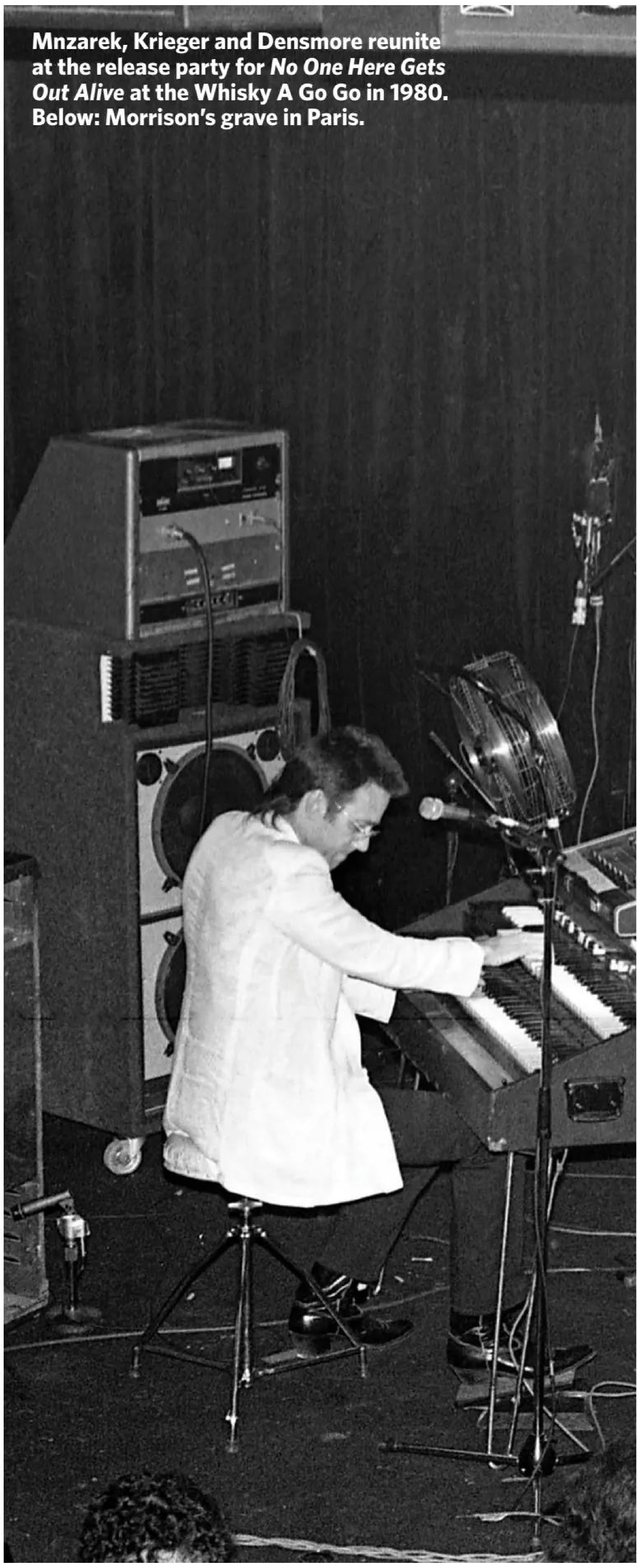
Incredible as it might seem, there hasn't been a whole lot of debate about whether or not to carry on. "Of all the mysteries surrounding The Doors, the one that maybe confounds people the most is why we thought we could still be a band after Jim died," wrote Robby Krieger in his 2021 memoir, *Set The Night On Fire*. "It seems so ridiculous now, but there was some logic to it."

To be fair, there was more than a little logic to it. Krieger, Ray Manzarek and John Densmore had been writing and preparing songs for the next Doors album, while Morrison holidayed in ▷

"Our label was behind us all the way. Why not keep it going?"
Robby Krieger

Other voices: the Morrison-less Doors in the mid-70s.

LEFT: DONNA SANTISI/GETTYT



Mnzarek, Krieger and Densmore reunite at the release party for *No One Here Gets Out Alive* at the Whisky A Go Go in 1980. Below: Morrison's grave in Paris.

UNIVERSAL IMAGES GROUP VIA GETTY IMAGES INSET: JOHN WOOLFORD

Paris. According to Manzarek, Morrison had even rehearsed a number of new Doors songs prior to leaving for France. His non-return wasn't viewed as quite the artistic crisis it seemed. "At the time it made sense to write songs," reasoned Krieger. "It made sense to record. Our label was behind us all the way…Why not keep it going?"

In retrospect, the trio conceded that they should've allowed a period of mourning. But, as Densmore rationalised in his own biography, *Riders On The Storm*: "We were so fired up to go on before Jim checked out that we didn't really acknowledge his death and grieve."

The immediate fruit of their labour was Other Voices. None of the band seriously entertained the idea of finding a replacement for Morrison, so they decided amongst themselves that Manzarek and Krieger would share lead vocals. Manzarek at least had form in this department, having sung in pre-Doors outfit, Rick & The Ravens. The rest of the set-up was pretty much business as usual. Regular producer Bruce Botnick was behind the controls, while recording took place in the familiar surrounds of The Doors Workshop – site of the *L.A. Woman* sessions – in West Hollywood.

Notwithstanding the enormous Morrison-sized hole, *Other Voices*' other major difference was its team of revolving bassists. Jerry Scheff returned from *L.A. Woman*, but shared duties with Jack Conrad, Wolfgang Melz and Ray Neapolitan. The songs, at best, are serviceable. At worst, The Doors sound like a workaday bar band.

Krieger's *Variety Is The Spice Of Life*, for instance, quickly lapses into deadweight boogie, hardly enlivened by trite lyrics: *'All these pretty women with nothing to do / C'mon and help me try to find something new.' I'm Horny, I'm Stoned* sounds just as bad as its title suggests; *Down On The* Farm – supposedly rejected by Morrison during the *L.A. Woman* sessions – can't seem to decide whether it wants to be Canned Heat or a country pastiche.

There are some worthy moments, however. *Tightrope Ride* rattles along like prime Stones. Lyrically, it feels directly aimed at the band's departed frontman, acting as both tribute and cautionary tale. There are allusions to isolation, madness and courting danger, while the final verse draws comparison to another doomed young soul: *'We're by your side, but you're all alone / Like a Rolling Stone, like Brian Jones.'*

> **"The Doors without Morrison weren't The Doors, were they?"**
>
> **Ray Manzarek**

Elsewhere, *Hang On To Your Life* finds The Doors locating their classic groove, underpinned by Melz's sprightly funk bassline. The song accelerates in time, ultimately racing headlong into a manic jam. The epic *Ships With Sails* is similarly striking, not least for an extended instrumental passage that finds the trio truly inspired, negotiating folk-rock and jazz, and crowned by a great, open-ended Manzarek solo. It's telling that *Other Voices*' choice moments tend to be vocal-free.

Released in late October '71, the album couldn't compete with its platinum-shifting forebears, but peaked, fairly respectably, just outside the Billboard Top 30. Elektra boss Jac Holzman announced sales of 300,000, which, bolstered by a successful American tour that included sell-out dates at Carnegie Hall and Hollywood Palladium, was enough to warrant more studio time.

"[Jac] wasn't naïve enough to think a Morrison-less Doors album would break any sales records, but he stood by us like he always had," noted Krieger. "His undying support was – for better or worse – one of the big reasons we had to the guts to press forward."

For better or worse, indeed. The threesome wasted no time in recording a follow-up. This time around, The Doors opted to produce the album without Botnick, drafting in the highly-respected Henry Lewy – best known for his work with Joni Mitchell and Crosby, Stills & Nash – as engineer. In turn, Lewy enlisted a clutch of session players that included another round of guest bassists, percussionist Bobbye Hall, jazz supremo Charles Lloyd and backing singers Clydie King and Venetta Fields. The scenery changed too, albeit none too radically, The Doors switching base from the Workshop to A&M Studios a couple of miles away on N. LaBrea Avenue.

The resulting *Full Circle* didn't veer a whole lot from its immediate predecessor. Again, Manzarek and Krieger split lead vocals. And while it's patently unfair to compare either to Morrison, both men's singing abilities are limited, however much spirit they try to inject. They're hardly saved by the music either. *Get Up And* Dance, with The Flying Burrito Brothers' Chris Ethridge on bass, quickly descends into a generic chug. *'Golden days!'* goes the lyric, as if attempting to convince themselves that they're onto a good thing, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

Hardwood Floor doesn't help The Doors' rapidly sliding reputation either. Here, Manzarek riffs away on rinky-dink piano like he's playing for change in the saloon of some Western theme park. On *Good Rockin'*, a cover of Roy Brown's jump blues standard made famous by Elvis as *Good Rockin' Tonight*, he goes all Jerry Lee Lewis on piano while Krieger sets about channelling Scotty Moore. The less said for *4 Billion Souls*' excruciating call for world peace – the better.

Yet *Full Circle* also deserves credit for daring to experiment a little. *The Mosquito*, the album's sole three-way co-write, offers a playful and unexpected burst of mariachi, complete with recurring hook, handclaps and party ambience. It was inspired by a holiday that Krieger and his wife took to Baja in Mexico, where they were serenaded one evening by a bunch of local musicians.

"They had a song about a mosquito that I wanted to learn," he recalled later. "But when I got home I couldn't quite remember it, so I wrote my own mariachi-sounding tune with simple Spanish lyrics…

The Doors lean into it with such gusto – swirling organ runs, a Densmore drum break, jazzy outro – that you can almost forgive Krieger for rhyming *'mosquito'* with *'burrito'*.

Full Circle packs a couple more surprises in *Verdilac* and *The Piano Bird*. The former takes a musical detour into New Orleans jazz-funk, dominated by Manzarek's organ-playing and Charles Lloyd's tenor sax. *The Piano Bird* follows in similar vein, led out by Krieger's light, rhythmic guitar figure. There's a loose, carefree air to it all, with Lloyd's jazz flute high in the mix, perhaps suggesting an unexpected way out of The Doors' post-Morrison malaise.

THE BEST
ROCK N ROLL HEAVEN
The Doors
JIM
BEST
JIM MORRISON

Released in August '72, *Full Circle* fared worse than *Other Voices*, peaking at no.68 in the States. Each album hardly registered at all in other territories, despite the novelty success of *The Mosquito* in random parts of Europe, where it became a Top 20 single. It's instructive to note that Krieger dispenses with both LPs within two pages of his memoir. Densmore is even more dismissive in *Riders On The Storm*, washing his hands of both in just a couple of paragraphs.

The Doors were still a decent live draw through. So much so that, following their subsequent tour of Europe, the band flew to London in early ▷

Above: Krieger, Manzarek and Densmore in the 70s. Right: Reunited in 1984 to mark the release of the *L.A. Woman* video.

1973, with the express purpose of finally recruiting a new frontman. They weren't after a Morrison copyist. Instead, as Krieger put it, they wanted "someone who could theoretically take us in a bold new direction."

Paul McCartney, Paul Rodgers and Joe Cocker were among the names brainstormed in The Doors' hotel room. Contrary to rumour, Morrison disciple Iggy Pop was never in contention. A front runner soon emerged in the shape of Howard Werth, who'd recently forsaken art-rockers Audience for a solo career.

"I came on the scene because Jac Holzman wanted to make Audience the new band on his Elektra label," Werth told *Classic Rock* in 2014. "But after we broke up he decided to try to put me and The Doors together."

Werth had already started work on his first solo effort, *King Brilliant*, but agreed to take part in rehearsals with Krieger, Manzarek and Densmore in West London. "Those rehearsals were quite strong and powerful," he recalled. "We were just ploughing through. It wasn't a matter of them suddenly turning round and going: 'Oh, that's good' or 'You're the one'. We were just enjoying it and waiting for the situation to happen or not. And, as it turned out, it didn't."

> **"We didn't really acknowledge Jim's death and grieve."**
>
> **John Densmore**

Manzarek duly flew back home with his wife Dorothy, who was pregnant at the time and miserable in England. But not before the keyboardist had rowed with Krieger and Densmore over the musical direction of the band. In simple terms, Manzarek wanted more jazz, while the other two were intent on pursuing rock.

"It was just time to put The Doors to bed," Manzarek explained to *Melody Maker* later that year. "Some things can go on for a long time and others can't. And The Doors without Morrison weren't The Doors, were they?"

Determined to make the most of the UK trip, Krieger and Densmore stayed on and formed the Butts Band with singer Jess Roden and others. The group lasted through a major line-up change, relocation to Los Angeles and two so-so studio albums. It was, said Krieger, "our first lesson in trying to escape the shadow of the past."

Meanwhile, Manzarek released a couple of ill-judged solo efforts, briefly rehearsed with Iggy Pop and, in 1977, started his own band: Nite City. Nobody bought those records either. The shadow of the past, it seemed, was longer than any of them imagined.

Sometime in 1977, Robby Krieger was sorting through some old boxes when he happened upon a present that Morrison had given him prior to leaving for Paris. Morrison had self-published a book of poetry, bound in red leather and gold-stamped with the title An American Prayer. Leafing through the slim collection, the guitarist began thinking.

Morrison had gone into the studio to record some poetry in February 1969. The idea, hatched between him and Jac Holzman, was to release a spoken-word album for Elektra. The singer returned again on 8 December, 1970 – his 27th

ROBERT LANDAU/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

UNIVERSAL IMAGES GROUP VIA GETTY IMAGES

birthday – at Village Recorders in L.A. Producer John Haeny picked up Morrison on the way, stopping off at a liquor store to buy him a bottle of Old Bushmills Irish whiskey as a gift. There was methodology in this tactic. As Haeny later explained: “[Ex-Doors producer] Paul Rothchild told me that Irish whiskey was the key that unlocked the door to the room where Jim kept the crazed Irish poet.”

Haeny had intended to travel to Paris in the early summer of 1971, at Morrison’s request, to record the album in earnest. But it wasn’t to be. The producer ended up sitting on the session tapes for the duration, until Krieger called several years later. Haeny duly invited the three surviving Doors up to his house in Laurel Canyon to take a listen.

“When Jim’s voice came out of the speakers, I instantly heard lifts and falls,” Krieger recalled in *Set The Night On Fire*. “Rhythms and hints of melodies. Jim had a naturally musical way of speaking, and it immediately sparked ideas in my head for guitar licks and chord structures.”

With Haeny overseeing the project, Krieger, Manzarek and Densmore once again set about the task of putting Morrison’s words to music.

Blues seemed the obvious starting point as a textural backdrop, perfectly illustrated on the sultry, bruised *Angels And Sailors*. But The Doors opted to mix it up, guided by the varying cadences and tones in Morrison’s speech. *Curses, Invocations* pivots around a discreet jazz riff; *American Night* is all clangy dissonance; *Ghost Song* dives into fusionist funk, Manzarek vamping away while guest Bob Glaub punctuates things with snapping bass.

Other elements are drawn from audio collage. There’s dialogue from Morrison’s experimental film *HWY: An American Pastoral*, bits of jam sessions, excerpts from *Riders On The Storm* and such. An unruly live version of *Roadhouse Blues* is spliced from two Doors gigs in New York and Detroit from 1970. *A Feast Of Friends* is set to a new arrangement of classical piece *Adagio In G Minor*, initially cut during sessions for *The Soft Parade*. “Jim had always loved the recording,” justified Krieger, “so we thought it would be fitting to revive the song for him.”

THE DOORS
OTHER VOICES

FULL CIRCLE
DOORS

MAXI-SINGLE
Apocalypse Now
THE END
DELTA

Thematically, *An American Prayer* was both self-glorifying and conceptual. The Doors split the poems into five loose sections, covering Morrison’s formative childhood, high school years, poetic ambitions, Doors fame and, as Manzarek later put it, “a final summation, in a way, of the man’s entire life and philosophy.”

Released in November 1978, the album did much to massage the myth. *Dawn’s Highway* featured the oft-repeated tale of how the Morrison family –with four-year-old Jim in the back – came across a truckload of Native Americans scattered on a desert highway, bleeding to death after an accident. Looking back, he believes that *‘the souls of the ghosts of those dead Indians / Maybe one or two of ‘em, were just running around freaking out / And just leaped into my soul.’* Here was Morrison portrayed as rebel poet and shaman, rock’s broody leather Dionysus, mojo risin’ from the grave. Never mind the mixed reviews: *An American Prayer* went platinum, becoming the biggest-selling spoken-word album in history at the time.

Its success set into motion a Morrison revival that quickly morphed into cultural fixation. Within six months, Francis Ford Coppola was using The Doors’ *The End* to presage the dread and horror of *Apocalypse Now*, Morrison’s soul-purging nightmare writ large over American involvement in Vietnam. In 1980, *No One Gets Out Here Alive*, by Jerry Hopkins and Danny Sugerman, became the first Morrison biography. Criticised for Sugerman’s implication that the singer may have faked his own death, its sensationalism fed directly into the growing legend.

Elektra sensed an opportunity too. A reissue of The Doors’ debut album was a hit all over again. A hurriedly assembled greatest hits collection went multi-platinum. By September 1981, *Rolling Stone* had Morrison splashed on its cover, 10 years after his death, under the editorial: “He’s hot, he’s sexy and he’s dead!” It turned out that Morrison had already called it in the words of *An American Prayer*: “We live, we die and death not ends it.”

Q&A

John Densmore

In this 2013 interview, The Doors drummer looked back on loss, litigation and his relationship with Jim Morrison.

Words: **Max Bell**

The former Doors drummer John Densmore has plenty on his plate in 2013. He's just published his second book, *The Doors Unhinged: Jim Morrison's Legacy Goes On Trial*, which deals with a counter-suit filed against Ray Manzarek and Robby Krieger for allowing their old band's music to be used in adverts, and also takes a wider look at the role corporate big business plays in exploiting rock music – or vice versa

The trial was dishearteningly acrimonious, and goes back to the drummer's attempt to prevent his former bandmates from going out as The Doors Of The 21st Century in 2003, a battle he lost. While *The Doors Unhinged* was hitting the shelves, Densmore learned of Manzarek's death. It's a sad postscript to a messy affair, but there is a silver lining: Densmore and Krieger have buried the hatchet and will play some dates this autumn.

In the light of Ray's death did you have any second thoughts about the *The Doors Unhinged*?
No. The inner circle knew Ray had cancer for quite a while. When I heard it was serious I called him for the first time in years. Thank God we had closure. Previously I'd sent Ray and Robby the final chapter, which tells them how much I love those guys, because the rest of the book is a bitter pill. They were my musical brothers.

The origins of *The Doors Unhinged* go back to 1968, when Jim Morrison refused to allow General Motors permission to use *Light My Fire*.
Yeah. The opening line is "Fuck you"! It's about a tragedy – the argument in court with me and the other Doors, and them wanting to sell our catalogue for commercial gain. I stand by it 100 per cent. I've been listening to Ray's playing with new ears – the way he could split his brain and play bass parts left-handed and melody and chords with the right hand. He was the mattress for Jim's lines to lie on.

Ray's curse was to be the perennial spokesman for Morrison – a thankless task.
Spot-on. Ray seemed to carry on talking about The Doors as if Jim's death was a grand PR master plan. He became a bit of a pop psychologist. He should have looked inside. Although I'd say that losing Jim was our ticket to the world. Maybe Ray scheduled his grief. But you can't leave emotion in the garage. I've broken down several times since Ray died and I'm glad I have.

Yet Ray's passing has brought you and Robby back together.
Sure. I suggested to him we go and play some Doors songs, but not with a 'Jimitator'. We haven't played in aeons [not since The Butts Band, in the mid-70s]. I hadn't seen Robby in years. He did say: "I don't want to talk about the book or the trial ever again."

He doesn't like confrontation?
Who does? They put me through a lot at the trial. It was a train wreck – me versus The Doors Inc. Fans thought I was destroying the band, when I was trying to preserve the legacy. In court they said I was a commie pinko and a terrorist! Jim would have loved the trial. He'd be laughing his head off. Probably is.

The Doors Inc. has served you all well. You're wealthy men.
I've got deep pockets. I wanted to spread the dough around. Hoarding money is like stowing fertiliser – it stinks.

Even today, Jim Morrison is always the elephant in the room.
Before he died, someone asked him: "Would you do anything differently?" And he said: "Yeah, I'd like to be a Zen gardener and live a quiet life." He'd think it outrageous he became an icon.

Plenty of people testified in your favour: Neil Young, Tom Waits, Tom Petty, Eddie Vedder…
Well, money is a provocative subject. Jim wasn't interested in money at all. His problem was he was a kamikaze drunk. I wonder if he would have gone into rehab. Eric Clapton and Eminem did. Sometimes I think Morrison could have turned his life around. But that wouldn't do much good for his rebel image, would it?

Jac Holzman, Elektra Records founder and your old label boss, recently said he thought the band wouldn't have lasted much longer after the *LA Woman* album.
We might have moved into film music. It was discussed. I spoke to Jim when he called me from Paris [May, 1971]. I was the chosen one. Lucky I was home. I wanted to sense whether he was still drinking heavily, and yes he was. That was my giant worry for the group, because he got worse. He left LA for Paris in a very bad state. In Ray's book, *Light My Fire*, he says I begged Jim to come back to California. Wrong. Morrison called me to ask how *LA Woman* was doing, and I told him that *Riders On The Storm* was the new single. He said: "That's great. But I still don't want to come back to Hollywood yet." Ray also said that Jim hated me and wanted me out the band. But, as Robby said, you could say the same thing about any of us. Supposedly Jim couldn't stand me and we went through hell. Yet I'm the one preserving his wishes.

It was supposed to be a democracy.
We all had veto powers, because Morrison insisted on that. He never wanted to be credited as the lyricist. Thanks to the group, we all acquired a nice house and groovy cars. If we were broke I might not be such a hard-arse. If you don't need the money, it's like what Tom Waits says: "Do you really want to turn your lyrics into a jingle?"

Did anyone ever see Jim playing a guitar?
No. I saw him bash a piano with his elbows. And his harp playing was like his piano work: atonal, avant-garde, far out. I gave him bad vibes about his self-destruction, and that's why he hated me [laughs]. I'm kidding. When I first heard his words, I knew how to drum for him. He was so fucking gifted. *'The day destroys the night/Night divides the day.'* That stuff is made for rhythm. I ate it up. Playing with Robby should be easy enough. The songs are my roots. The Doors is my DNA.

JEFF VESPA/GETTY

John Densmore: trying to prevent something precious becoming tarnished.

> “THEY PUT ME THROUGH A LOT AT THE TRIAL. IT WAS A TRAIN WRECK – ME VERSUS THE DOORS.”

HOLLYWOOD BABYLON

Oliver Stone's 1991 movie *The Doors* divided the critics – and the surviving band members. But it made Jim Morrison a star all over again and laid down the template for the modern rock biopic.

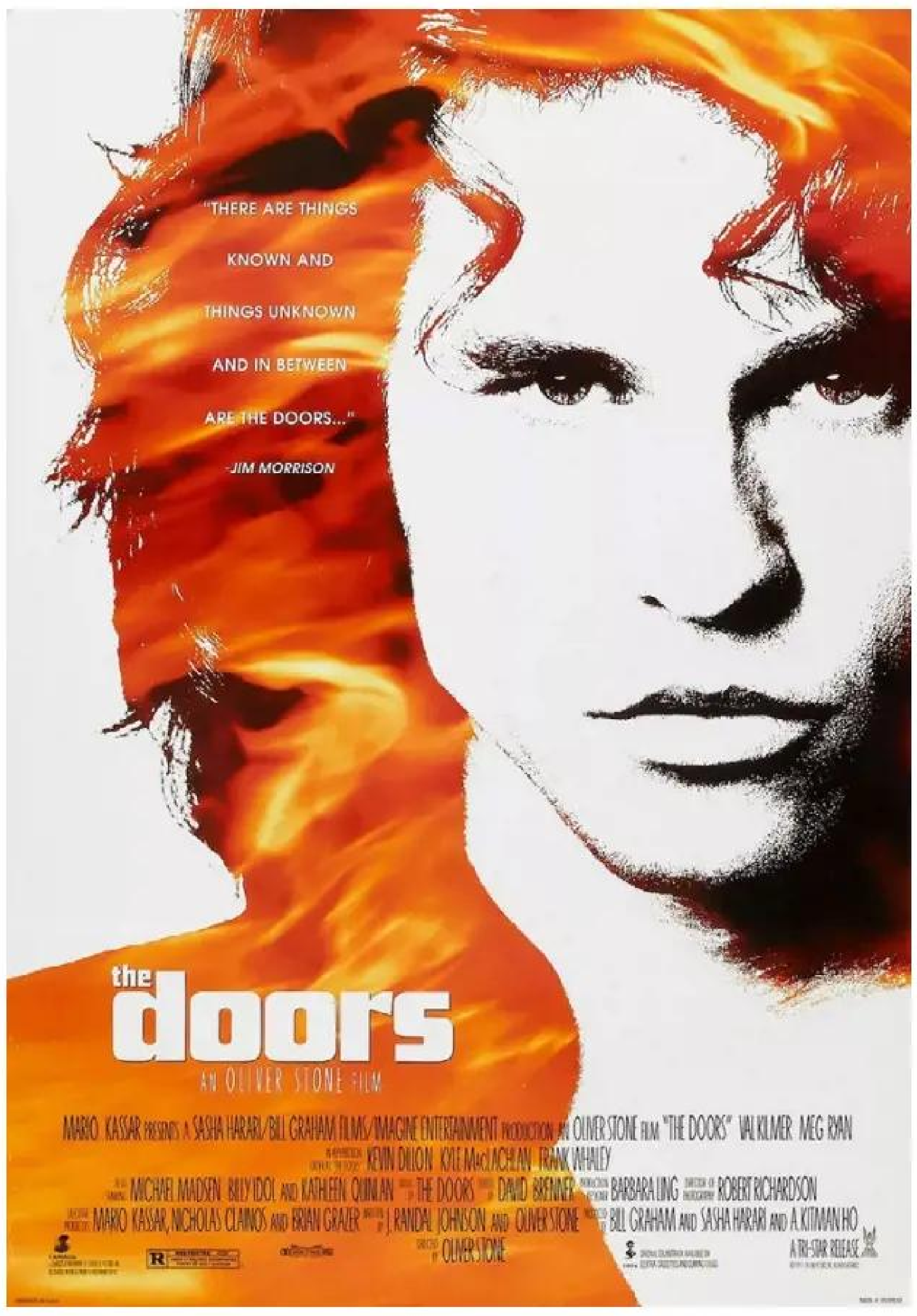
Words: **Joe Daly**

Few bands have left as indelible a mark on rock as The Doors. Fusing poetic lyricism with enigmatic melodies, their music was a dark reflection of the psychedelic era, captivating audiences with an immersive blend of rock, blues, performance art and poetry.

It was inevitable that Hollywood would capitalise on the mystique of this legendary band, although it took 20 years after singer Jim Morrison's death for someone to do it. But the movie that eventually emerged, Oliver Stone's *The Doors*, would stand as arguably the most influential music biopic ever made, laying the template for much that followed.

Released in March, 1991, *The Doors* chronicles the band's tumultuous journey from obscurity to infamy, capturing their raw energy and Morrison's potent magnetism – not to mention all of the sex and drugs that rock gods of that era enjoyed. Morrison was a visionary with a high intellect, a shamanistic charisma and a rapacious appetite for drugs and alcohol that led to violence, antisocial outbursts and ultimately his death at age 27. Stone – who won the Best Director Oscar for 1986's *Platoon* and 1989's *Born On The Fourth Of July* – introduced an exhilarating new method of storytelling, blending masterful performances with jaw-dropping cinematography, druggy fantasy sequences and the dead-on recreation of not just a scene but of an entire era.

The power of *The Doors* lay in Val Kilmer's portrayal of Morrison, emerging as the embodiment of the band's mystical allure. His haunting performance was a masterclass in Method acting that saw the 31-year-old actor channel the hubris, darkness and creative fervour that defined the singer's persona. Considering that Morrison appears in nearly all of the scenes, this was the critical choice around which the rest of the movie would be arranged. Kilmer sang 70 percent of his songs, with the production team threading his vocals into Morrison's original tracks so seamlessly that differentiating between the two is all but impossible. And Kilmer looked and spoke exactly like Morrison, assuming the character so thoroughly that it's difficult to seriously consider anyone else, including Tom Cruise, John Travolta or even Johnny Depp – all of whom were reportedly considered – in the role.


"THERE ARE THINGS KNOWN AND THINGS UNKNOWN AND IN BETWEEN ARE THE DOORS..."
-JIM MORRISON
the doors
AN OLIVER STONE FILM

MAIN: CAROLCO/GETTY IMAGES

In Stone's hands, Morrison emerges as charismatic, otherworldly, insufferable and hopelessly full of shit – a heady blend of personality traits that we know will lead to his complete self-destruction and to massive collateral damage throughout the lives of his band and anybody close to him.

The film's authentic reimagining of iconic moments – such as Morrison's 1967 arrest for inciting a riot in New Haven Connecticut or his even-more-infamous 1969 performance in Miami, in which he allegedly exposing himself during a show – are vividly recreated with slow-building dread. Rather than focus on Morrison's climactic actions, Stone begins these scenes from far back, allowing tensions to gradually rise to a boiling point. When the chaos finally erupts, it feels cathartic.

Nor did Stone whitewash Morrison's descent into alcoholism and self-destruction. Kilmer's performance is grisly and at times hard to watch, as his character morphs from cocky sex symbol and would be poet to violent, insufferable addict who takes out his hostilities and pettiness on those who care for him the most. Many, including Stone, felt that Kilmer's performance deserved an Oscar award but he was snubbed by the Academy. In 2021, Stone told the *Hollywood Reporter*: "I do feel he was slighted. It was a once-in-a-lifetime kind of performance.“

No biopic is without its detractors and *The Doors* was no exception, not least among the band's surviving members. Keyboardist and co-founder Ray Manzarek was among the film's most prominent critics, citing myriad key factual errors.

"All you see is Jim as a drunken hedonist," said Manzarek. "The tragedy is that fame consumed him. But that wasn't Jim's message. He was intelligent… He was a good man who believed in freedom and in questioning authority. But you'd never know that from seeing this film."

Doors drummer John Densmore agreed, stating. "Oliver is interested in the self-destructive, creative, brooding personality – one not unlike his own – so he's focusing on that aspect of Jim. We were always complaining that the script was too dark…"

These critiques shine a light on a persistent challenge faced by music biopics – striking a balance between dramatic storytelling and historical accuracy. This tension between a director's artistic expression and factual fidelity has fueled debates within the genre, but it is also a testament to the enduring impact of The Doors.

For Stone, the goal was to transcend linear storytelling and to instead create a full sensory ▷

“We were always complaining that the script was too dark.”

John Densmore

Lizard King: Val Kilmer as Jim Morrison in *The Doors*.

Right: Val Kilmer recreates Jim Morrison's arrest in New Haven, Connecticut in 1967. Below: Kilmer and director Olibver Stone on set.

BELOW: EVERETT COLLECTION INC / ALAMY

CAROLCO/GETTY IMAGES

experience. The film's stylized visuals, courtesy of cinematographer Robert Richardson, recreated the hallucinogenic landscapes of the late 1960s with a hypnotic intensity.

"We had to go back into the past," said Stone. "We had everyone dressed in period, which was very expensive. We were also taking chances that we normally wouldn't. We were growing in our boldness. We wanted to challenge all the ideas. We had no rules, no limits, no laws."

Stone inserted fictional moments, such as Morrison angrily throwing a television at his bandmates as well as stitching in hallucinatory drug montages or the repeating motif of an Indigenous American appearing as Morrison's spiritual guide throughout the film.

The band – played by Kyle MacLachlan (Manzarek), Kevin Dillon (Densmore) and Frank Whaley (guitarist Robby Krieger) – emerge as wooden archetypes, with Stone relegating them to the role of impotent witnesses to Morrison's cataclysmic demise rather than as the vanguard musicians who created the towering soundscapes for the singer's lyrics. Likewise, Meg Ryan's performance as Morrison's long-term partner, Pamela Courson, is unable to overcome the disappointing lack of depth written into that character.

Yet Stone's recreation of the band's live performances is nothing short of revelatory; one is left feeling as if they had just attended an actual Doors show at the pinnacle of their fame. Two weeks after the film's release, Manzarek hailed these scenes as "brilliantly-filmed although over-amped and sensationalistic." As a testament to its impact on a new generation of fans the accompanying soundtrack album – essentially a *Greatest Hits* with the incongruous addition of The Velvet Underground's *Heroin* – reached platinum status in 2001.

From the novel approach to storytelling to its bold advances into the creative possibilities of cinematography, *The Doors* smashed old ideas about depicting the lives of well-known icons. It was never intended as a documentary or as canonical fact; this was Stone the artist, channelling the transgressive spirit of Morrison the artist, to convey something bold and unique.

"We did things film-wise that hadn't been done since the 60s. Just have some fun with it," said Stone. "I gave it my best shot and if it ain't exactly Jim, it's an impression and a reflection of a time that I would have liked to have seen."

> **"I wish we had made the money *Bohemian Rhapsody* had made."**
>
> **Oliver Stone**

The influence of *The Doors* is palpable in many more recent rock biopics. From Rami Malek's transfixing portrayal of Freddie Mercury in *Bohemian Rhapsody* to the jarring surrealism of the Bob Dylan biopic *I'm Not There* to the ambitious performance recreations of Baz Luhrmann's *Elvis*, echoes of *The Doors* ring loudly.

Speaking on The Doors' 30th anniversary, Stone said: "I wish we had made the money *Bohemian Rhapsody* had made. Look, every film has to be marketable. *The Doors* was not. We just made an outlaw film because [producer] Mario Kassar was out of his mind. He was willing to gamble. He didn't give a shit about all that stuff. He was a pirate. He made films against the grain."

Stone was flat-out wrong about the marketability of his film. Riding on the strengths of his pedigree and Kilmer's tour-de-force performance, The Doors raked in $9 million on its opening weekend in the America alone. The film would go on to make $35 million in the US. It also introduced The Doors' music and Morrison himself to an entirely new generation, making the singer a superstar once more 20 years after his death.

Despite the criticisms regarding the film's historical accuracy or the unflinching depravity of Morrison's portrayal, *The Doors*' influence cannot be denied. It brought the band's story to a new generation, ignited a spark of creative inspiration among filmmakers and rekindled interest in the band's music. Over three decades on, *The Doors* stands tall as a milestone in the annals of music biopics and a beacon of creative possibility to both filmmakers and musicians alike.

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> “Ian Astbury was Jim Morrison’s European cousin. They’re cut from the same cloth.”
>
> Ray Manzarek

Jim who?: Ian Astbury fronting The Doors Of The 21st Century in 2004.

Full Circle

In 2002, Ray Manzarek and Robby Krieger did the unthinkable and rebooted The Doors with new singer Ian Astbury. What followed were lawsuits, acrimony and a battle for the soul of the band.

Words: **Dave Everley**

Ray Manzarek and Robby Krieger’s decision to resurrect The Doors name in 2002 shouldn’t have come as a surprise to anyone. After all, the two of them, together with original drummer John Densmore, had released a pair of Jim Morrison-less albums after the singer’s death in 1971. No, what was surprising was that it took them so long.

They’d had plenty of opportunities to hop on the reunion bandwagon before. When The Doors were inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame in 1993, the original trio were joined for their performance by Pearl Jam frontman Eddie Vedder. The surviving members got back together to for the tribute album *Stoned Immaculate: The Music Of The Doors*, which saw them covering their own songs with help from members of Aerosmith, Stone Temple Pilots, Train and Smash Mouth. The latter was followed by an appearance on *VH1 Storytellers*, where Jane’s Addiction singer Perry Farrell, Creed’s Scott Stapp and, tellingly, Ian Astbury of The Cult metaphorically pulled on Morrison’s leather trousers.

For Robby Krieger, who rarely played Doors songs with his solo group, the catalyst for relaunching his old band was seeing the lucrative mini-industry of Doors tribute acts that had sprung during the preceding decade. He occasionally even sat in with some of them.

“I would see how much fun everybody was having,” he told *Classic Rock*. And little by little, I would just put a couple of Doors songs into my set. And then at one point, I was talking to Ray and said: ‘Shit, why don’t we go back out and do The Doors? These tribute bands are doing great and we could do it a lot better than that.’”

Manzarek liked the suggestion. “It seemed like a good idea,” he told *Classic Rock* in 2006. “It seemed like the right time. The opportunity came around when Harley Davidson called Robby and asked us to play for their 100th anniversary I said: ‘Sounds good to me.’”

They could have had the pick of singers to replace Morrison, but they went for the one who fit the best: Ian Astbury, who had impressed them at the *VH1 Storytellers* show. Astbury was a Morrison devotee, from his interest in Native American culture and shamanism to his brooding charisma. Years before, Oliver Stone had approached him with a view to him playing Jim in his 1991 biopic *The Doors*. Astbury ultimately demurred, though not before he had a memorable night out with Stone.

“I went out with Oliver, and all of a sudden I’m in Doors world,” Astbury said in 2019. “Manzarek, Krieger, Densmore, [Bruce] Botnick, even Timothy Leary. I’m in the Hollywood Hills, hanging out with all these people, having these incredible conversations.”

“Dark, brooding, Celtic, Christian, shamanic, American Indian spirituality, Buddhism, poetry lover,” enthused Manzarek of Astbury. “He’s very much like Jim Morrison. As a matter of fact I’d say he was Jim Morrison’s European cousin. They’re cut from the same cloth.”

When this reconstituted version of The Doors – renamed The Doors Of The 21st Century – played their first gig, at the House Of Blues in Los Angeles, they were a key man down. John Densmore was absent, his place taken by former Police drummer Stewart Copeland.

The official line was that tinnitus had prevented Densmore from participating in that gig and subsequent dates the Astbury-fronted band played. Those shows were well-received by Doors fans, not least because they played tracks from *L.A. Woman* that Morrison never had a chance to sing live first time around. There was even talk of a new album.

“We want to say something about the human condition in the twenty-first century, just like the Doors in the twentieth century said something about the human condition,” Manzarek told *Rolling Stone* in 2004.

But behind the scenes, things had turned ugly. Angered by his ex-bandmates’ use of The Doors’ name and a $15 million deal from Cadillac to use their music – something he claimed Morrison would have objected to – Densmore teamed up with the singer’s estate to sue them.

“They started using the name the Doors,” Densmore told *Rolling Stone*. “I sent some example of the ad to the estate and said, ‘Hey, your deceased son has been resurrected and has been performing… I asked Robby to stop and he said he would. But he didn’t.”

An long and unseemly lawsuit followed, which Densmore eventually won (he only made peace with Manzarek shortly before the latter’s death). Manzarek and Krieger were forced to change the band’s name from The Doors Of The 21st Century to Riders On The Storm (it would later simply be called Manzarek-Krieger). They continued to play live with Astbury, walking the fine line between imitation and homage. He left the band to rejoin the reunited Cult in 2007, though he remained enthusiastic about his time as a surrogate Jim Morrison. “I just dove into it,” he said in 2019. “Dude, I sang The Doors canon.”

Manzarek and Krieger continued to play the music they’d written four decades before with a succession of singers, most notably Dave Brock of long running Doors tribute band Wild Child. They would have continued were it not for Manzarek’s death in 2013 from bile duct cancer.

The keyboard player remained unrepentant about his decision to resurrect The Doors long after their talismanic singer’s death. Cynically or not, he insisted Jim Morrison would have given it his blessing.

“He’d love it,” he told *Classic Rock* in 2006. “That’s the irony. He’d love it because he’s a poet, and a poet would say: ‘Read my words aloud.’ There’s nothing a poet likes better than having someone speak those words out to an audience.”

Waiting for the sun: Manzarek, Astbury and Krieger visit Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris, location of Jim Morrison’s grave.

MAIN: JEAN BAPTISTE LACROIX/WIREIMAGE/GETTY

SIPA/SHUTTERSTOCK

“WAS BEING IN THE DOORS WORTH THE STRUGGLE? YES. APPARENTLY. PEOPLE SEEMED TO LIKE WHAT WE DID”

GETTY/ANDREW MACLEAR

So says John Densmore, one of the two surviving members of **The Doors**. In 2014, as the band's iconic 1969 documentary *Feast Of Friends* was released on DVD, *Classic Rock* reunited Densmore and estranged bandmate Robby Krieger for the first time in a decade to look back over the group's stellar career and unmatched legacy.

THE TWO SURVIVING members of The Doors sit at either end of a leather couch, as far away from each other as possible, a palpable sense of unease separating them. "This doesn't happen very often, so you must have some pull somewhere," guitarist Robby Krieger says wryly.

Krieger and his former bandmate, drummer John Densmore, have come together in the LA offices of the company that manages The Doors' estate. They're surrounded by mementos of their success, which began further along the Sunset Strip at the fabled Whisky A Go Go club back in 1966.

Even a year ago, getting the two of them together anywhere other than a courtroom would have been unthinkable. Densmore and his ex-compadres spent much of the past decade embroiled in a lengthy and acrimonious legal battle over the use of The Doors' name, and he and Krieger only reconciled after the death of keyboardist and founding member Ray Manzarek last year. Even today there's a whiff of residual tension. Densmore, dressed all in black with his thick grey hair swept into a ponytail, is blunt and domineering; Krieger is frail, quiet and calm, his benevolent manner in stark contrast to Densmore's more impatient state.

The pair are here to talk about their much-anticipated new DVD, *Feast Of Friends*. Shot in cinéma vérité style, the film chronicles The Doors' summer tour of 1968. Inter-cutting live footage with candid moments away from the stage, it provides a close-up view of life on the road with the group as they were on their way to becoming one of America's most influential and revered bands. "We've pilfered from it in the past," says Densmore. "Let's see the whole damn thing as it was intended."

In the 43 years since the death of the band's iconic singer, Jim Morrison, reams have been written about The Doors, much of it by Densmore himself. "Don't believe all this shit I wrote," he barks when one of his lines is quoted back to him. Now, as he and Krieger come face to face with each other, and with their past, we get to hear the real truth of what it was like to be in The Doors.

Words: **Kevin Murphy**

Whose idea was it to finally release Feast Of Friends*?*
Robby Krieger: I don't know. Maybe the fans. We interact a lot online with the fans, and I think they really wanted to see it – the whole thing, rather than just pieces stuck into other films.

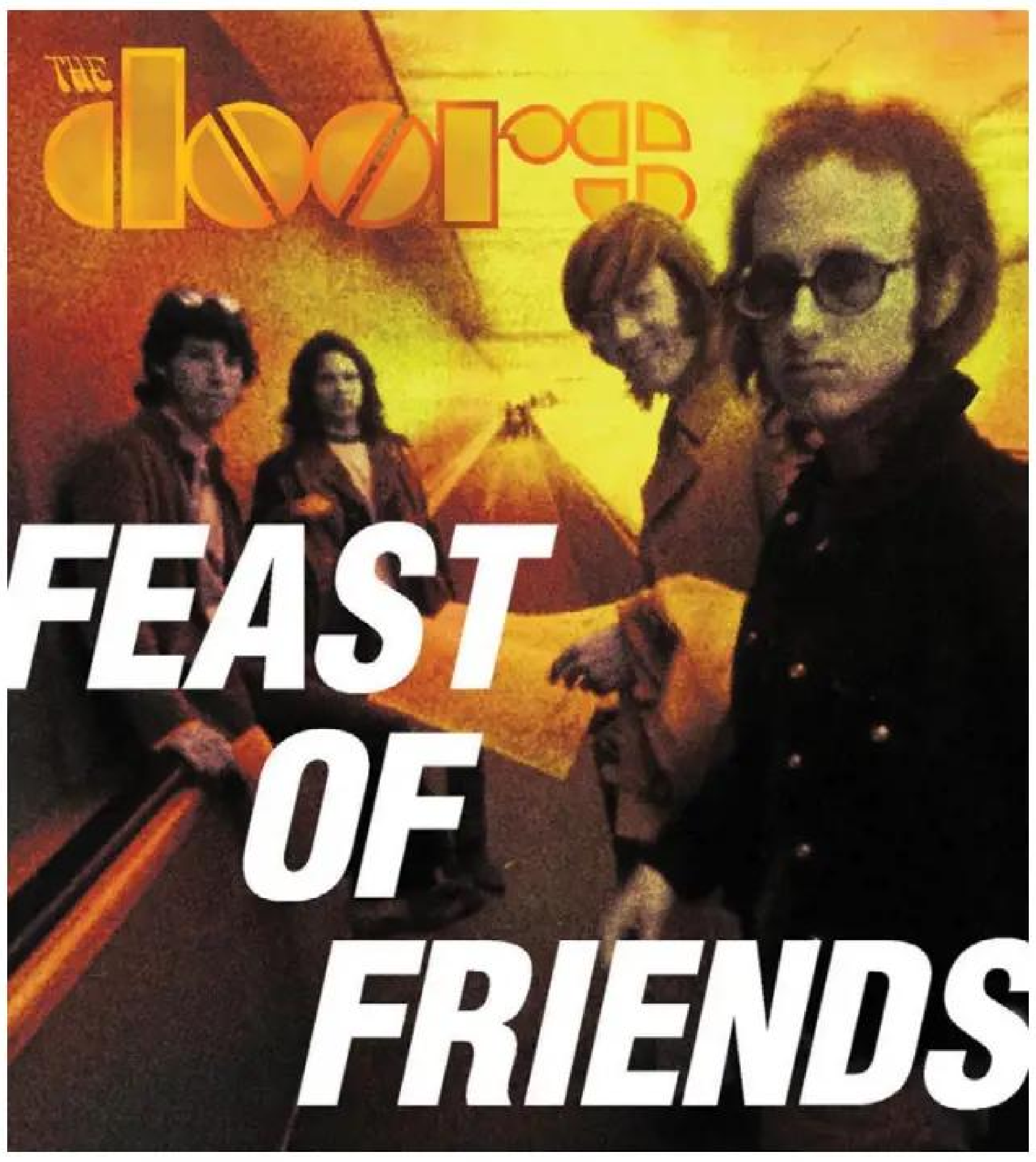
Why now?
Robby: Maybe we need the money now.
John Densmore: As the late, great Ray Manzarek would say, it's an alignment of the stars. It's a cosmic conjunction of planets that made this moment happen.

Was the release of Feast Of Friends *in any way prompted by the passing of Ray?*
Robby: No, nothing like that.

Did you initially have any reservations about making the film?
Robby: I thought it was kind of a waste of money, actually.

How do you feel now?
Robby: I wish we'd done it more now. I wish we had done all of our tours like that, with a film crew.

Was it painful or joyful watching the footage this time around?
Robby: It was fun because I hadn't seen it for a long time all together like that. It was very enjoyable.
John: To me it was poignant. Two Doors are gone, and seeing Jim and Ray on the sailboat at the end, it's very touching. It has the beautiful adagio for strings, and you're seeing this beautiful sailboat, and Jim, and Ray. It's powerful.



Will it shed a new light on The Doors?
Robby: I think so. I even said to myself: "Man, when people see this who have already seen [Oliver Stone's 1991] *The Doors* movie, and they think that's how Jim was, that he was a total idiot, and now they'll see him as a real person… how brilliant he is, a real person." Talking to the priest and stuff like that. I know that always bothered Ray a lot, the fact the movie… As good as *The Doors* movie was – I thought it was a great rock'n'roll movie – the script was just so stupid.
John: Wait a minute. It's really good but it's stupid? Which is it?
Robby: As a rock'n'roll movie, it's good. I think it's one of the best rock'n'roll movies out there.
John: Oliver chose to do the tortured artist, and he showed a lot of the torture.
Robby: He showed a lot of the drunk, none of the guy who was a real person.
John: The only thing that bothered me is it didn't have enough of the sixties for me.
Robby: It didn't have enough of the guitar player for me.

The two of you were involved in a long and bitter legal battle. What brought about the reconciliation?
John: Time. Passing of Ray.
Robby: All of the above. We still hate each other.
John: There was a screening of another documentary, *Mr Mojo Risin': The Story Of LA Woman* at the [Los Angeles] County Museum. They wanted a Q&A, and we did our blah, blah, and it was really cool that we played music for ten minutes – just the guitar and hand drums. We hadn't played these songs in a long time. It was sweet, man. For me, in four bars I was back. It was the old days.

Did you remain in contact in the years of the dispute?
John: Not too much.
Robby: Just in court [laughs].

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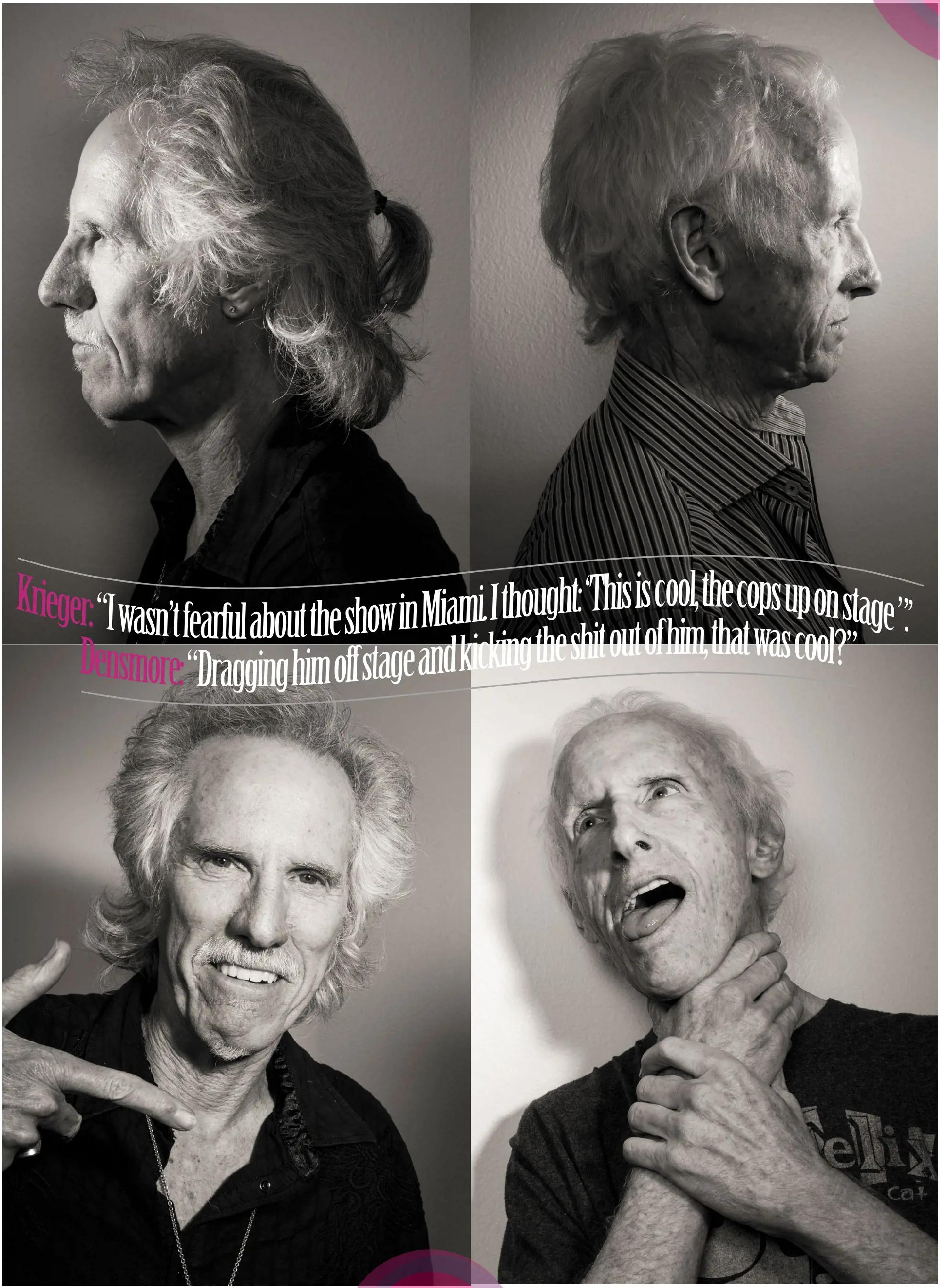


Krieger: "I wasn't fearful about the show in Miami. I thought: 'This is cool, the cops up on stage'."

Densmore: "Dragging him off stage and kicking the shit out of him, that was cool?"

PORTRAITS: TRAVISS SHINN

Look out, London: The Doors arrive in 1968.

GETTY

“I was thankful that Ray picked up the phone after I heard he was sick. It was healing.” John Densmore

Is there a sadness that you didn't reconcile when Ray was around?

John: I was very thankful that he picked up the phone when I called him after I heard he was really getting sick. We didn't talk about any of the struggles, we just talked about his health problems. But it was healing, that's for sure.

Next year marks The Doors' fiftieth anniversary. How do you feel about the band's legacy?

John: It's all about the drumming, really. Not the guitar playing. Think about it. If you've got a band with a shitty drummer, you're fucked; if you've got a band with a shitty guitar player, you can skate by [laughs and effects a rim shot]. That was a joke.

Robby: No. It's just another number. Fifty-one is just as good.

Are you happy to have the band's legacy intact, or would you have preferred to have carried on and become something like the Rolling Stones?

Robby: Obviously we wish that Jim and Ray were still here and we could still play if we wanted to. The fact is we didn't have a choice. A lot of bands play too long. But you just never know. Unless it would have happened you can't say whether it would be good or bad.

John: Yes and no. Jim's twenty-seven forever. Everyone always says: “Well, if Jim was around today would he be in AA, clean and sober, dude?” I always said: “Nah. He was a kamikaze drunk.”

John, in your book Riders On The Storm *you wrote: “I had no idea it was going to be that dark of a band.” Were you surprised by the direction the band took?*

John: Jim's self-destruction was hard. It wasn't fun. I knew we were making magic, and there was a crazy guy in the band. No one could stop him. Not every artist is self-destructive and creative. In his case it came in the same package, so it wasn't easy.

Do you consider The Doors a dark band?

Robby: In some ways, but not always. Jim could be really funny sometimes. Probably the dark outweighed the light. I don't think that was on purpose, that's just the way it came out.

Robby, you said that the first day you got together you thought you were as good as the Rolling Stones.

Robby: It just felt like: “This works, man. This is a band that could go all the way.” I had been in different band situations before that – not very many – but this was just a cut above everything.

The original band were only together for a little over five years, yet you've found yourselves spending the next forty-five years talking about them. Has it been frustrating to reflect on it rather than live it?

Robby: Yes. It would have been better to live it.

John: It's been downhill ever since you wrote that fucking *Light My Fire.*

Is it hard to have your lives defined by something you did so long ago?

Robby: It's a good problem to have.

Are you both at peace with the idea of being known as John Densmore of The Doors and Robby Krieger of The Doors? Is that something you wrestled with?

Robby: I fought against it for a while. I had all my solo albums, and I never wanted to play Doors songs for a long time. Then I'd start seeing all these Doors tribute bands. Then one day I sat in with Wild Child and they were having so much fun. I'm going: “How come they get to have all the fun?” So I started doing more Doors stuff in my band.

Is that the same for you, John?

John: I'm coming back around, yeah. In *Riders On The Storm* I wrote that ‘of The Doors' is permanently etched on my forehead. And I've come to terms with that. I remember Ray saying to both of us: “It's better to have been in The Doors than not.”

What is your happiest memory of The Doors?

John: The early days, when we're making the transition from the Whisky to small concert halls: “Goddamn, we are going to make a living at this. The train's leaving the station. It's going to happen.” The mass adulation of Madison Square Garden is great, but sensing that we're going to have a career playing music… Fuck, man, that's the ultimate.

Robby: Maybe hearing *Light My Fire* go to number one on the radio. We were just sitting around the table listening to the Top Ten countdown, and when Stevie Wonder came up at number two we knew we were number one. That was pretty cool.

Do you have any regrets?

Robby: We could have tried harder to keep Jim from killing himself. But in those days that wasn't cool. You didn't intervene with somebody's drug problem.

John: We tried. We tried to have a meeting, and he didn't show up.

Robby: He did, remember? He came to my dad's house that day and we talked, and he quit drinking for about a week. We did a couple of things like that. He definitely knew that we weren't cool with it. But he couldn't control himself, basically. He was on a runaway train, and the only way to get off is jump off, and you're going too fast. That's how I always thought of it. My dad tried to convince him to go and see a shrink.

John: He went for one session and put the guy on the whole time [laughs].

Robby: The problem was he was probably smarter than any psychiatrist.

After Jim's death you carried on, recording two more albums. How tough a decision was it to keep going?

Robby: It was very tough.

John: It wasn't tough at all.

Robby: I mean, you knew it was not going to be easy because our front guy had gone, but what else could we do? We didn't want to replace Jim, because how could you do that? To go on ourselves without any frontman was not something we wanted to do. But we liked playing together.

John: That's what I was going to say. It wasn't tough. We didn't want to give up what the trio had musically developed together. We just read each other's lives, musically.

At one point, John, you said: “The Doors without Jim is like the Stones without Mick. That's ludicrous.” Yet the three of you decided to carry on together without Jim. How were you able to reconcile that?

John: We had a lucrative deal for five albums after Jim died, and we only did two, so I think we realised we're missing the guy in the leather. Without Jim it was falling apart. He was the glue.

Singer as performance artist: Morrison in full flow onstage.

JACK ROSEN/GETTY IMAGES

"In a way Jim got what he wanted. He really was interested in death." Robby Krieger

Robby: Well, we actually went to England. We all moved over to England after the second album, to try and find a singer.
John: Don't tell the truth.
Robby: We were all over in England, and it was kind of stressful because of the horrible place we're living in. They'd turn the electricity off at night. Then John and I said: "We think the band should go in a hard rock direction." Ray wanted to go more jazz, so that was it for him.

Was it difficult to adapt to life after The Doors?
Robby: When you're in The Doors, life is not very realistic – limos and all that stuff. So when it was over, you say: "What am I going to do the rest of the time?" It becomes a problem. Not musically. I had various bands that I was doing, and we knew that none of them would ever be as big as The Doors, but you can't stop playing music.
John: [To Robby] Do you get recognised much, like when you're just at the market or something?
Robby: I average once a day.
John: It's sort of increased because of the web and all that shit.
Robby: Before, it wasn't so much because you'd gotten older and people don't recognise you.
John: They know what we look like now. I'm not crazy about it interfering with my private life.
Robby: You have to blend in more, John. See, you gotta stop wearing those shoes. [Densmore is wearing black Vans customised with neon piping.]

Is it a nice experience to be recognised?
Robby: Sometimes it is, sometimes it isn't. Like the one guy that came up to me. I was at a stop sign, and he came running up to the car and said: "Hey, you Robby Krieger?" "Yes." "You and I have to take acid and die together!"
John: When my kid's in school he gets: "Is your dad…?" And I said: "If you're hassled a lot about it, just say: "No, he's not my dad!" And they'll go: "Okay," and walk away.

John, it's fair to say you had an uneasy relationship with Jim. How would you describe it?
John: Love-hate. I loved him for his creativity, hated him for his self-destruction. But, as Robby says, in retrospect, he couldn't help it. It's more love now.

He had a profound impact on you too, Robby. In one article you stated: "Dealing with Jim kind of changed me, too." How did it change you?
Robby: It would change anybody. He was the most influential person in my life, except for my parents. That's how he was. I think people sensed that, even in the audience.

John, you talked of being intimidated by Jim. What was intimidating about him?
John: He was really well read, and I wasn't. Musically he didn't know what I knew, but I didn't know what he knew as far as reading and literature. Now I am slightly caught up. I keep getting blown away by his poetry and lyrics.

Do you think he was trying to be intimidating?
John: No!
Robby: Oh yeah!
John: No. Yeah! He would manipulate people.
Robby: He would take acid, and he would always find the guy who was taking it for the first time and he'd try and freak the guy out; he'd turn the lights

TOUCH ME

How journalist Harry Shapiro's sexual awakening was soundtracked by The Doors.

I know how this is going to sound but, trust me, it is all true.

I'm this pretty geeky looking, just-turned-16-year-old fifth-former standing in the dinner queue at school, unknowingly being eyeballed by a girl in the Upper Sixth. It's 1968 and she wants me to come to her Christmas party. But can't be seen to be fraternising with the pond life, so she gets somebody in my year, a boy who lives opposite her house, to hand me the invitation.

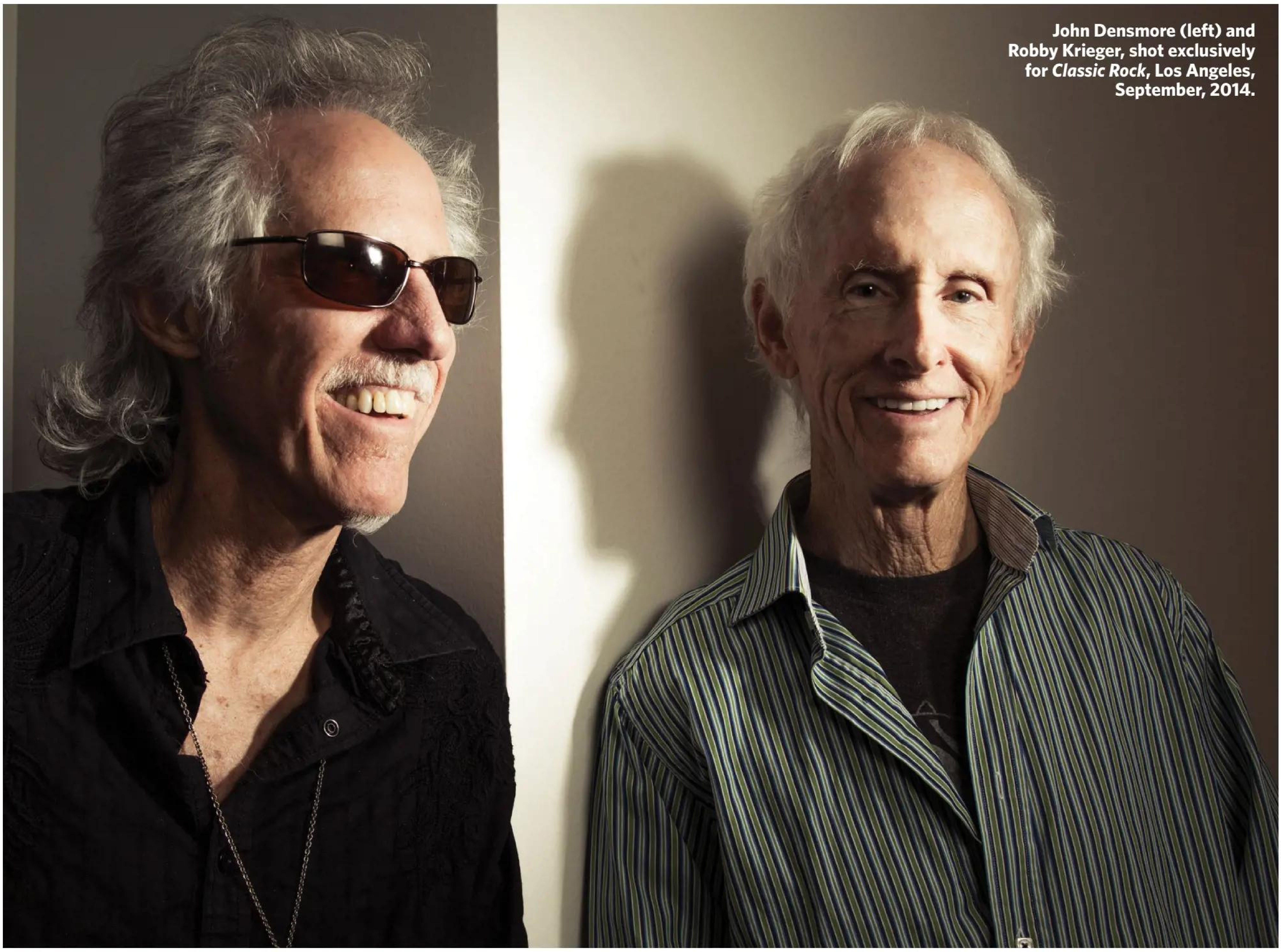
I have absolutely no idea what is going on – and have absolutely no intention of going. Then, on the day, she rings me up. "Are you coming?" "Er, well… no… not really." And then how's this for cheek? "Okay, so long as somebody comes and picks me up." After all, it was a fair trudge to her place and no transport.

Now, with being geeky comes a certain unworldliness in the ways of the flesh and other bits. I arrive to be met by a positive bacchanalia of writhing bodies and people jumping up and down on each other. She glides up to me and gives me a whacking great French kiss as *Soul Kitchen* is blasting out the stereo. I can honestly say I hadn't the foggiest notion of what or who had hit me, but whatever it was it was pretty cool.

Fuelled with more alcohol than I had ever consumed cumulatively in my whole life, the evening went by in a glorious haze of groping and drinking, of which the Pan god of rock would have been proud.

Light My Fire, Twentieth Century Fox (yep, she was a flaming redhead) – Jim wrote the script that night. It really was the perfect soundtrack to an awakening from a world previously devoted exclusively to Arsenal football club and the blues.

We became an item, and The Doors just followed us around everywhere – I am convinced that the music that burns deepest in the soul is the music with the most meaningful context. I owe this girl a lot. And although inevitably we split up, we stayed in touch, and still meet up from time to time. It's very dangerous to go back, but every time I hear early Doors… Strange days indeed.



John Densmore (left) and Robby Krieger, shot exclusively for *Classic Rock*, Los Angeles, September, 2014.

PORTRAITS: TRAVISS SHINN

> "They buried Jim, like, the day after he died. No autopsy, no nothing. We had no doubt that he had died, though." Robby Krieger

on and off real fast or something like that. He liked to be in control. He liked manipulating buttons.
John: He liked pushing boundaries. Testing people.

Jim would frequently quote the William Blake line: 'The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom'. Was he trying to live by these words?
Robby: Yeah, he did try to. One time when he contracted syphilis, and he heard that if you get syphilis you go crazy, he said: "I'm not going to go to the doctor. I'm going to see if I really get crazy [laughs]" He lasted about a week before he went to the doctor.

When Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin died, given Jim's excesses did you think perhaps he would be next?
Robby: Yes, especially when he said that.
John: He intimated that you're drinking with number three.

Robby, you once said: "It would have been so great if we'd just had a guy like Sting, a normal guy who's extremely talented too. Someone who didn't have to be on the verge of life and death every second of his life."
Robby: I did say that. It would have been. Not Sting himself, maybe. But, hey, it would have been great if Jim hadn't had the demons and could still write that stuff. Maybe that's impossible, I don't know.
John: In his case, no. The weight of the demons was on us too.

In your book, John, you wrote: "This isn't the way it's supposed to be. It's supposed to be relaxed and fun being in a famous rock'n'roll band." It appears that you weren't able to enjoy your success.
John: It was just, phew, man! I used to go to the Whisky and hear Love, and I'd think: "I'm fucking better than that drummer. Why am I not in that band? Why am in this band with this crazy guy?" I don't feel that way at all now. I also thought I could have played in The Byrds easy, with one hand. But apparently this band has gravitas, and I'm proud to have been a part of it.

John, during the recording of the Waiting For The Sun *album, you were getting headaches and stress-related rashes.*
John: I had a fucking rash for a couple of years. No stress [laughs]. That's the weight of the demons, the elephant in the room, and nobody's acknowledging it. I think they say that in AA. There's elephant shit everywhere, but that's our meal ticket. Keep it quiet. I was sick, but I was psychologically sick too. Like: "What's going to happen to Jim? Oh fuck!"

Robby, your relationship with Jim seemed rather less strained. Why do you think that was?
Robby: I don't know. It just didn't bother me as much as it did John, maybe. To me, it was: "Okay, this is how it's supposed to be in a rock'n'roll band."

When did things start to change with Jim?
Robby: As soon as we got big. Billy James, who was the guy that signed us to Columbia Records, told us: "If that guy ever gets power, look out!" [Laughs] That's when Jim got power, when the Whisky

Lights, camera, Morrison: The Doors perform on *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* TV show in 1969.

started happening, and people started sucking up to him. There was no filter.

What was life like on the road with The Doors?
Robby: It was usually a constant worry about where Jim was. I don't know why we worried, he always showed up for the gig. He'd just take off with anybody and take whatever drugs they had. There was a time in Amsterdam, somebody gave him a block of hashish and he just swallowed it and ended up in the hospital. That was the gig he missed.

Did you feel that the New Haven incident, in which the policeman sprayed Mace at Morrison backstage prior to the show, marked the beginning of the end?
John: I didn't know it was the beginning of the end, but it was pretty scary. The cop pushed his buttons and he pushed them back.

Were you fearful that it might all suddenly just end?
Robby: I wasn't. I thought: "This is pretty cool, man, the cops up on stage."
John: Dragging him off stage and kicking the shit out of him, that was cool?
Robby: Well, I didn't know they were going to beat the shit out of him. The audience never forgot it. It made the movie.

At one point you wanted to stop doing live shows. Why was that?
John: Jim's alcoholism. There wasn't any control when we played live. If he was loaded in the studio we could go home. There weren't ten thousand people watching.

John, you were the last member of The Doors to speak with Jim, when he called you from Paris and talked about coming back to work with the band again. Given your strained relationship, were you happy for him to remain in Paris?
John: Like I said, I loved him for his creativity. I was also extremely worried about his health. He sounded kind of fucked up on the phone. I was trying to see if he was loaded. A little bit.

But you would have welcomed him coming back?
John: If he had cleaned up. I love the French, but unfortunately they drink wine for breakfast.

Friends united: The Doors in 1968.

GETTY X3

The band's fortunes were waning somewhat at the time of Jim's death. Did you feel that things were beginning to fall apart?

Robby: Pretty much, yeah. That wasn't the best time. We couldn't really play anywhere because there was a thing called the Hall Owners Association and they had banned us pretty much from playing any of the good places.

What was your initial reaction when you got the news of Jim's death?

Robby: I didn't believe it at first. There were always rumours of Jim's death. So we didn't really believe it. We sent our manager, Bill Siddons, over to Paris to see what had happened. Then he came back and said it was all true. "Well, did you see the body?" "No." They buried him, like, the day after. No autopsy, no nothing. We had no doubt that he had died, though.

Was there ever a sense of guilt?

John: I don't feel guilty now, because I just did what I could then. But I'm not the same person I was then. You know this question: "Would you do it differently?" It's like: "Yes. Hopefully I would learn from what I went through." And: "No, because I'm proud of what we've done." So yes and no to that.

Has there been a point when you've felt guilty, Robby?

Robby: No, not really. Because in a way Jim got what he wanted. He really was interested in death. Not that he wanted to die, but he was so curious about it. I think he really didn't plan to live very long.He was not a happy camper, especially in the last days. The whole trial thing going on and all that. Everybody says: "Well, he got fat on purpose and he was trying to stop being a rock star." I don't think that's true. I think he just got fat. I don't think he liked it that much. I think he was fat and unhappy.

Why did you decide to re-form The Doors in 2002?

John: Oh fuck. That's a whole can of worms. I have another three-hundred-page diatribe on that.

Robby: I had been doing more Doors songs in my band, and I called Ray and said: "We haven't played this stuff for thirty years. Want to try it again?" We got together to do this VH1 *Storytellers* [in 2000], and we had different singers. John played on that. That went well so we decided this might work.

John: First I said: "Robby, why don't we don't go on tour with a bunch of singers so we don't fall into the trap of one guy." Which you said was a great idea, but too expensive. True. Then I got this ringing in my ears around that time – tinnitus. I couldn't go.

Now, as you reflect back over nearly fifty years as a member of The Doors, with all the highs and lows that it's entailed, was it all worth it?

John: Worth the struggle? Yes. Apparently. People seemed to like what we did. And Robby got a bunch of money, which is what he's interested in.

Robby: Yes. Never a doubt. ❶

LIGHT MY IRE

In 1966 everyone loved The Doors. Everyone except East Coast rivals The Velvet Underground.

Doors fans may have been grief-stricken at the news of Jim Morrison's death, but his detractors weren't. Chief among them was Lou Reed, who said: "Somebody got a phone call saying Jim Morrison had died in Paris in a bathtub. And I said: 'How fabulous, in a bathtub in Paris!' I had no pity at all for that silly Los Angeles person."

Ever since his early Velvet Underground days, Reed's attitude to The Doors had been one of antipathy, symptomatic of his mistrust of the West Coast scene in general. Reed's basic argument was that the VU were "really, really smart" and the California bands were "really, really stupid. It was purely a matter of brains."

This animosity was most likely aggravated by the VU's West Coast debut at The Trip, LA's hip nightspot, in May 1966, where the Velvets were jeered. John Phillips, Mama Cass, Sonny and Cher, Ryan O'Neal and The Byrds were among those in attendance. Cher left early and was quoted in the next day's paper as saying the VU's music "will replace nothing, except maybe suicide". Reviews were similarly unkind.

Also in the audience for that opening night was Jim Morrison, just starting out with The Doors. The Velvets were then part of Andy Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable, a multimedia show that featured dancer Gerard Malanga. The latter's performance saw him cavorting around in leather with a whip. Six months later The Doors went to New York and played at Ondine's. Morrison had co-opted Malanga's whole leather schtick. As Warhol recalled later: "[Gerard] flipped. 'He stole my look!' he screamed, outraged." Today Malanga is a little more diplomatic. "Let's say he appropriated it out of inspiration," he says.

Warhol had been quick to spot the screen potential of Morrison. During The Doors' East Coast visit, he invited the singer to take a lead role in a porn movie, *I, A Man*. According to the filmmaker, Morrison "agreed to bring a girl over and fuck her in front of the camera. But when the time came he never showed up."

Rob Hughes

The doors track by track

Doors guitarist **Robby Krieger** dives deep into the band's back catalogue for the stories behind some of their classic songs.

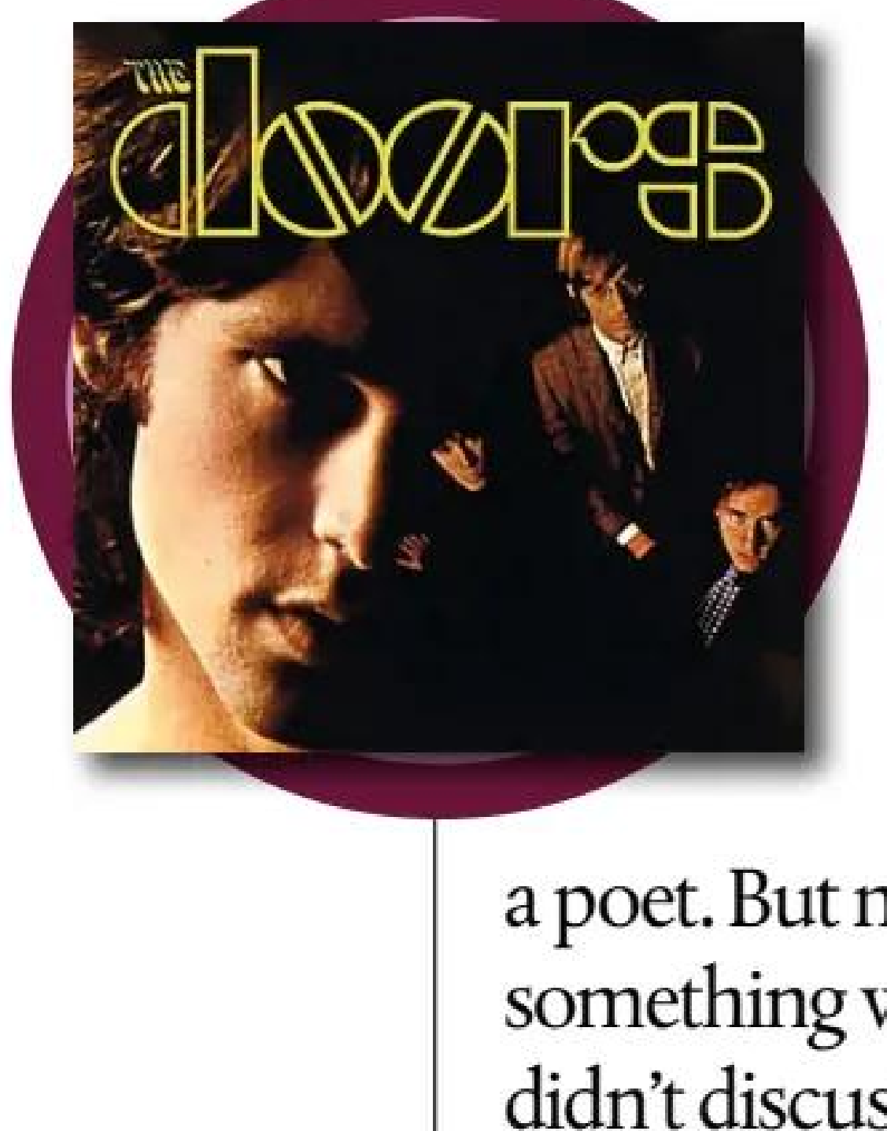
Words: **Max Bell**

Robert Alan Krieger was The Doors' lead guitarist. By his own estimation he "wrote about 75 per cent of the music and 25 per cent of the lyrics", including some of the group's singles – the legendary *Light My Fire*, for one. With renewed interest in all things Doors-related, and the imminent release of the much-delayed *L.A. Woman 40th Anniversary Edition* finally hitting the shops, *Classic Rock* spoke to Robby at his Beverly Hills home about some of his favourite Doors songs.

Indian Summer

Morrison Hotel, 1970

Robby Krieger: "This is the very first song we attempted on the studio. We recorded it in August 1966 at Sunset Sound Recorders in Hollywood [intended for the album The Doors], although we didn't use it again until *Morrison Hotel* four years later. Why? We just didn't know how to approach it properly. So we played it real soft, lit a bunch of candles, turned all the lights in the studio off so it was dark and mysterious. We were afraid to play loud in the studio, even though we were pretty loud in the clubs. The recording was a revelation. It was so eerie and quiet that we didn't want to put it on the first record.



Jim [Morrison] and I came up with *Indian Summer* at the same time we wrote *The End*, but because both songs used Indian-style tuning we thought they sounded too similar. Although it's a love song it still has an air of mortality. Why would a young man like Jim think so much about death? Sure he was a poet. But my theory was that he always felt he had something wrong. Not like a cancer, which people didn't discuss in those days, but maybe he knew he was going to die young. He certainly gave that impression more than most people. He told me once: 'I'm not obsessed with death, just interested.'"

Break On Through(To The Other Side)

The Doors, 1967

"A song we'd played many times in the clubs. So it felt rehearsed. All we did was set the mics up and go. We didn't have much money for recording anyway, and the first album was more or less like recording live. Jim was in the vocal booth so he could re-do his vocal, which he did here, otherwise it was straight ahead.

"It's an opening statement song, one that springs our arrival on the scene. 'Here we are,' is what it meant. The title was used on the first billboard for a group on Sunset Strip – 'The Doors Break On Through With An Electrifying Album' – and it was the first single. It kinda stiffed in the 40s [locally, not nationally]. But when Arthur Lee and Love's first single made the Top 40 everyone in LA was excited, so we certainly didn't deem it a failure. Elektra [Records] made us change the line '*She gets high*' to get it on the radio. I couldn't believe Jim agreed to that. I got the lick on *Break On Through* from *Shake Your Moneymaker* by the Paul Butterfield Blues Band."

Light My Fire

The Doors, 1967

"Every time we played this song, audiences went crazy. We held out against cutting the length down, until Dave Diamond started playing it on his little FM station out in the Valley. He told us: 'Every time I play this the phones go fucking crazy.' So we knew we'd be stupid not to release it. But it still wasn't easy to get AM radio. We had to do a free concert for Humble Harve on KHJ to get airplay. That's how it worked. Harve wasn't exactly humble, either. He ended up in jail for murdering his wife.

"*Light My Fire* was my first Doors write. We didn't have enough material, so Jim said: 'You do something.' He didn't seem pissed off that I'd written our first big hit, although he was the academic English major. Actually, he was very secretive about his own songs. He never discussed his songs much. What they meant much less. He liked it because it could be about sex, or lighting a joint and having sex. In later years he made a few remarks about always having to play the song, but we did it anyway and it was never a hindrance, because it got the best reaction of anything we ever did, so… He did write the second verse. I asked him: 'Why do you always have to talk about death? This is supposed to be a happy song, and you're talking about funeral pyres and wallowing in the mire.' But his lines were pretty funny, just rhymes to balance it off. Jim always liked songs that had multiple interpretations. I heard some odd ones. One guy said it was about lighting the fire in your third eye, which I enjoyed because it gave it a Buddhist slant. But actually, nah. It was just about sex."

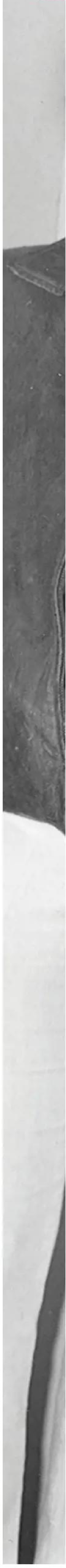
Strange Days

Strange Days, 1967

"By the time we did the second album we had eight-tracks and we knew our way around Sunset Sound. We employed backwards piano, all sorts of trickery, and we got Paul Beaver to play Moog synthesiser over Jim's vocal. We also had Doug Lubahn [from Clear Light] on bass, who improved the sound and came up with great ideas for *You're Lost Little Girl* and *Love Me Two Times*. On the first album, Larry Knechtel overdubbed bass, but Doug actually rehearsed with us and it was a vast improvement.

"The lyrics are claustrophobic and dark, which encapsulated Jim's outlook on life: '*Strange days have found us, they're going to drag us down and destroy us*'. It was very menacing.

"I can see why people think that *Strange Days* is our best record, because it has the most cohesive mood, which stays throughout. We had enough songs left over from the first album, and we knew how to ▷



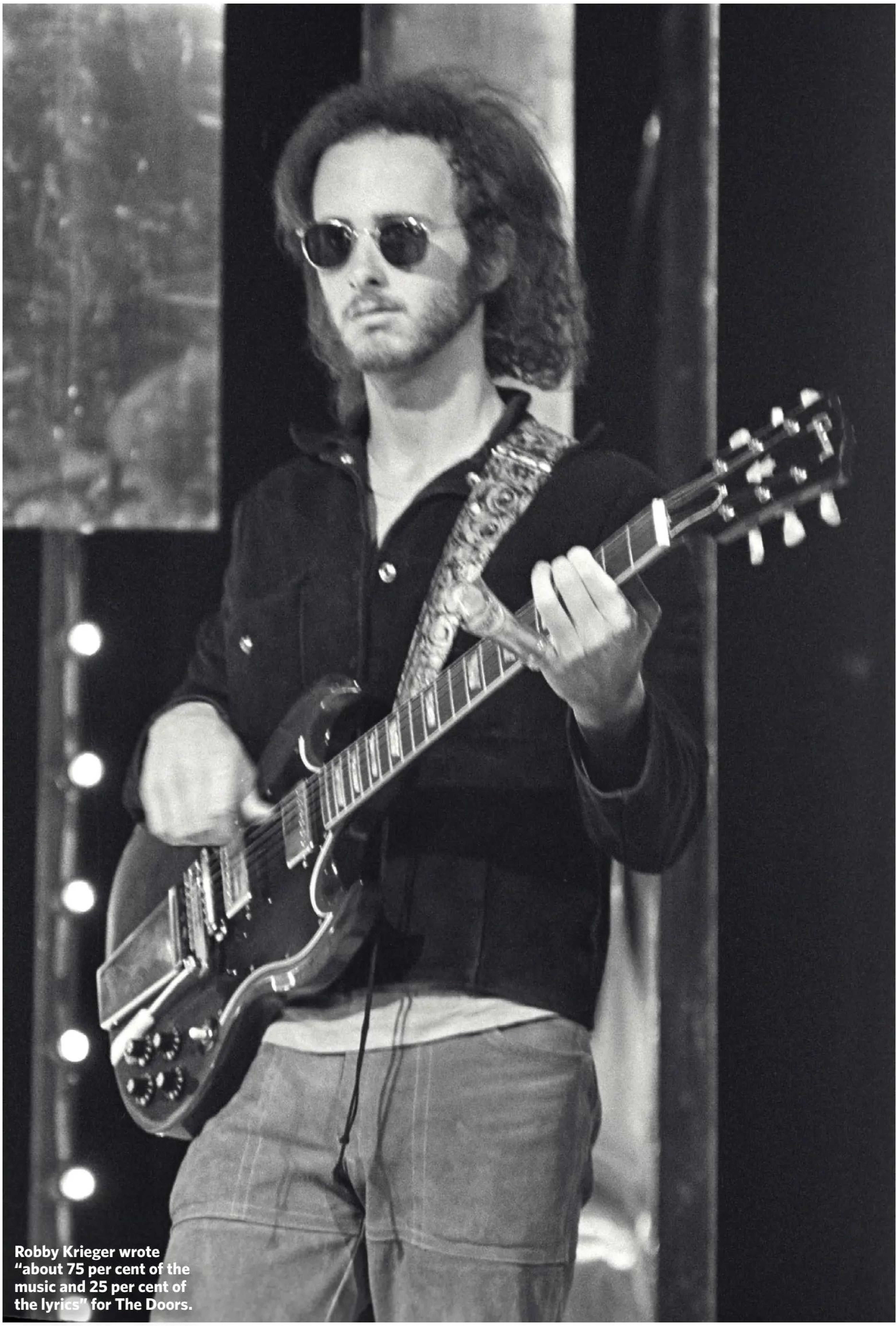
EARL LEAF/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

play 'em and we knew how to record. We'd improved, so it was like the best of both worlds. Confidence was very high. Paul Rothchild and Bruce Botnick had perfected their production for The Doors. We had a sound that was unique. Although Elektra boss Jac Holzman was still credited as production supervisor, that didn't mean anything. Jac rarely came to the studio. We would have taken a suggestion from him because he was such a brilliant guy, but we knew what we were doing and Elektra was cool. They hardly ever told us what to do."

People Are Strange

Strange Days, 1967

"We were in the middle of recording the *Strange Days*, album and Jim was in a really lousy mood – I mean he was suicidal, talking about killing himself. He came to the house I shared with [drummer] John Densmore, and we'd been listening to this stuff all night, so at 6am we said: 'Look, let's go out to Laurel Canyon and watch the sun come up and maybe you'll be in a better mood.' So we did, it did, and a light suddenly went on in his head. He came up with the song there and then. We rushed home, he wrote it down, I put music to it and we recorded it that day. I like the guitar solo because I did it in one take without thought or mechanical interruption. The single was a hit, and people were singing it everywhere you went in Los Angeles, which was funny, considering its origin."



Robby Krieger wrote "about 75 per cent of the music and 25 per cent of the lyrics" for The Doors.

Love Me Two Times

Strange Days, 1967

"Now this should have been a bigger hit, but Jim was busted in New Haven, Connecticut in December 1967 when a policeman found him making out with a girl in the backstage showers. He used a can of mace on them, and Jim mentioned it in the concert and was arrested for inciting a riot in the hall and outside the New Haven Arena. Charges were dropped, but the single was pulled off the airwaves immediately. Overnight it disappeared without trace.

"People were getting very uptight in America. I wrote the song about Vietnam and being in a band: you're going off on tour or you're going to war and have to leave your old lady behind, so get it while you can – '*Love me two times, because I'm going away*'. I borrowed a lick here from The Blues Project with Al Kooper. I stole plenty from those records [laughs], and from Koerner, Ray & Glover's folk blues. Paul Rothchild produced all those records. I knew who he was when I was in high school. He produced all the records I liked, so having him produce The Doors was a complete bonus."

Hello, I Love You

Waiting For The Sun, 1968

"This was originally one of the six demos the band did at World Pacific Jazz Studios in September 1965, before I joined three weeks later. It got a lot of flak because people said we'd sold out, it was bubblegum, teenybopper trash. It did get to number one, but the allegations were absurd if you listen to the lyrics. The second verse is something Jim wrote about watching a black chick on the beach at Venice and wanting to get it on with her. It was such an early song, we had no idea of commercialism anyway. People also said we copped it from The Kinks. That isn't true. I actually suggested to John that he adapt the drum beat from Cream's *Sunshine Of Your Love* for the beginning, so it was a Cream idea, not a Kinks steal."

Five To One

Waiting For The Sun, 1968

"Jim was wasted pretty much throughout the making of the *Waiting For The Sun* album, which was starting to piss producer Paul Rothchild right off. On this particular day Jim had been out all night and he'd drunk a bottle or brandy, or maybe two, and was slumped against the studio wall. The thing is, it takes so long to record that eventually he pulled it together. Jim had a knack of being able to stage a recovery and sing even when he was fucked up. But he sounds drunk on the song. The shows were getting like that too. You never knew which Jim you were gonna get."

Wishful Sinful

The Soft Parade, 1969

"This has the English horn solo by Champ Webb. Paul Harris, who worked with Tom Rush and Al Kooper, arranged *The Soft Parade*, and he'd done *The Thrill Is Gone* for BB King. He was great, although

ARALDO DI CROLLALANZA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Jim Morrison: "You never knew which Jim you were gonna get," says Krieger..

LEFT: CHRIS WALTER/WIREIMAGE/GETTY

I didn't think Doors records should sound like that. But I love his arrangement, and I'm proud of the melody. It's one of my all-time favourite songs and I still play it live to this day. I suppose *Soft Parade* is a sore thumb – Jim Morrison with a big orchestra. But I shouldn't complain, because I have more songs on the album than any other. In any case, Morrison was going through the whole Miami trial thing, so it was hard for him to concentrate on writing."

the doors/the soft parade

Tell All The People

The Soft Parade, 1969

"One of my songs on *The Soft Parade* where we got a lot of criticism for using strings and horns. I wasn't crazy about the idea, so I kinda agree with the comments, but when we heard it in the studios it sounded good. I wish we hadn't done it, and yet I like it. Although I'd love to remix the record without the arrangements. I wrote it with Jim in mind, as usual, and he liked this one. He wasn't so keen on *Touch Me*, which was originally called *Hit Me*. He thought people would take it literally! I stole the idea for the *'follow me down'* line for this from a Leadbelly song. It didn't have any political connotation, although Jim did think people might assume he was telling them to follow him. That was never the intention."

Peace Frog

Morrison Hotel, 1970

"The *Morrison Hotel*/Hard Rock Café album was the Jim Morrison comeback. To begin with, Jim and the whole band dug around his notebooks to find some poems we could put to music. This was taken from *Dawn's Highway* and *Newborn Awakening*, with the lines about *'the Indians scattered on dawn's highway bleeding'* after Jim witnessed the aftermath of a car wreck in the Californian desert when he was a child. He said that was the first time he tasted fear. He changed a lot of the words for the song. I like the distorted chords and the wah-wah. I didn't use that too often, because Paul Rothchild told us don't use ideas associated with other people – i.e. Hendrix."

THE DOORS
MORRISON HOTEL
ROOMS

Land Ho!

Morrison Hotel, 1970

"This was also adapted from a modified poem of Jim's, and I came up with the lick and the drop tuning. His father and his grandfather were both naval men, and this song goes together with *Ship Of Fools*. They're both about seafaring and pioneer spirits and life on the ocean. They're about people leaving earth, and the idea of the first people to come to American shores. *Land Ho!* sounds biographical. I always thought he wrote it about his own grandfather, but you'd have to ask him."

Cars Hiss By My Window

L.A. Woman, 1971

"That was recorded on the 'blues day' sessions for *L.A. Woman*. We always loved Jimmy Reed, and the whole band wanted to do a Reed-type song. It's a simple arrangement, although the words aren't simple. We used to jam to a lot of Jimmy's stuff, and whenever we did Jim would always change the lyrics. He was either too lazy to learn the real ones or he thought he could do better. I don't know. I turned Jim on to a lot of blues and so did Ray [Manzarek, keyboard player], who was from Chicago and grew up with that, and was always a huge Muddy Waters freak. Jim grew up in Florida, in the south, and he also heard blues when he moved to California in the late 50s. I played him the Delta sounds, Robert Johnson and Chuck Berry, and he liked it when I did the Delta slide or bottleneck. On *L.A. Woman* he was totally into the blues, which he had by default. It was inside him, in his blood."

Hyacinth House

L.A. Woman, 1971

"Summer of 1969 we were at my house where I lived with my wife Lynne, and Jim came over with our mutual friend Babe Hill. We played cards – which is in the song as conversation: *'Why did you throw that jack of hearts away? It was the only card in the deck I had left to play'* – and then Babe disappeared into the bathroom for hours. I don't want to know why. Eventually he emerged, which gave Jim the line about *'the bathroom is clear'*, because he was desperate to go.

"We had a big glass wall, and lots of hyacinths growing in the yard outside and the cats were running among them – the lions in the lyric. We also had a pet bobcat – a lynx. It wasn't legal but we'd found it in a pet store. It was like: 'Oh, what a cute kitty'. Two years later it was 40lbs of terror. The bobcat was called Bobby and she wasn't too friendly. You had to wear gloves. Eventually I felt bad about keeping her so, I gave her to a guy in Malibu who specialised in rehabilitating animals and setting them free in the hills. He was amazing. He taught them how to hunt. He let real lions and leopards loose out there. Anyway, Bobby inspired the lyric about *'the lions'*. Morrison liked animals.

"We recorded an acoustic demo in my home studio with guitar and tom-toms. It was just a fun song based on the afternoon's activities, but Jim's words gave it a mysterious appeal."

She Smells So Nice/Rock Me

Recorded in December 1970, but not released until it was included on L.A. Woman 40th Anniversary Edition, 2012

DOORS
L.A.WOMAN

"Originally we were just going to remaster *L.A. Woman*, until Bruce Botnick found an innocuous-looking box that happened to contain all the out-takes that appear on the new expanded version, the alternative versions and studio chatter. Everyone had forgotten them or didn't even think they existed. We'd certainly never heard them until Bruce's find. The best one is this 'new' blues song that we did first thing on the blues day, along with *Crawling King Snake, Cars Hiss By My Window* and *Been Down So Long*. It was just an improvised jam with funny lyrics: *'I'm gonna switch on the television, I'm gonna drown'*. Shortly afterwards we vamped around on *Rock Me*, another try-out, which we wouldn't have released on the album, except this is where Jim first comes up with the line about *'Mister Mojo Risin', keep on risin'*…' which he then used in the song *L.A. Woman* itself. That was the first time we ever heard him sing that phrase. I'm glad we found that."

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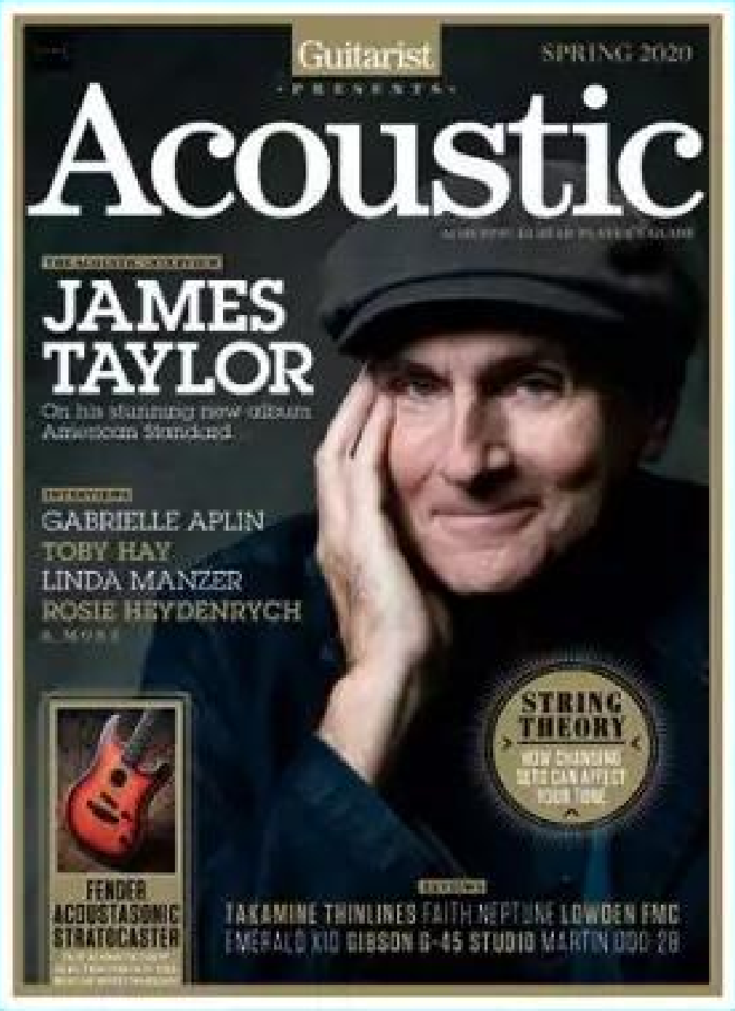
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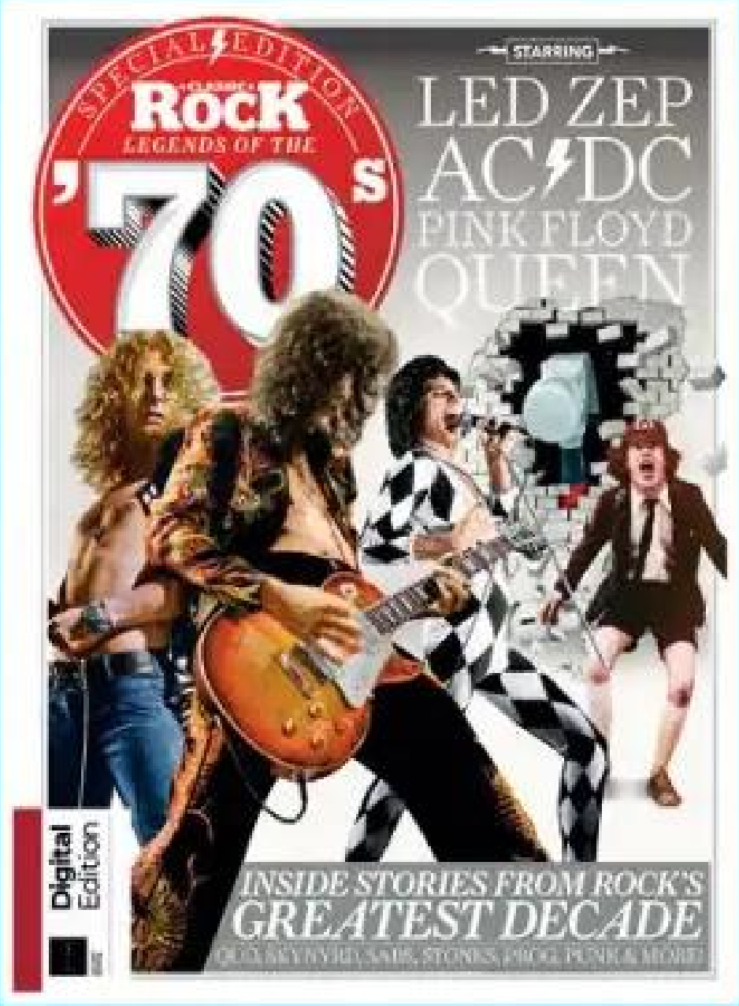
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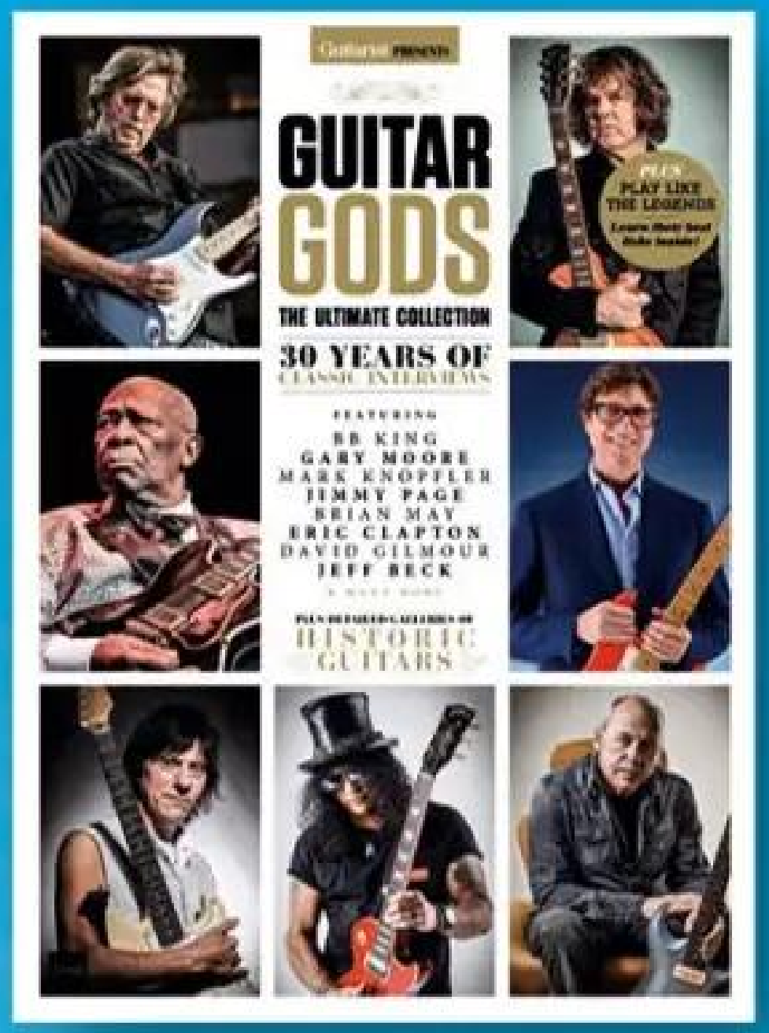
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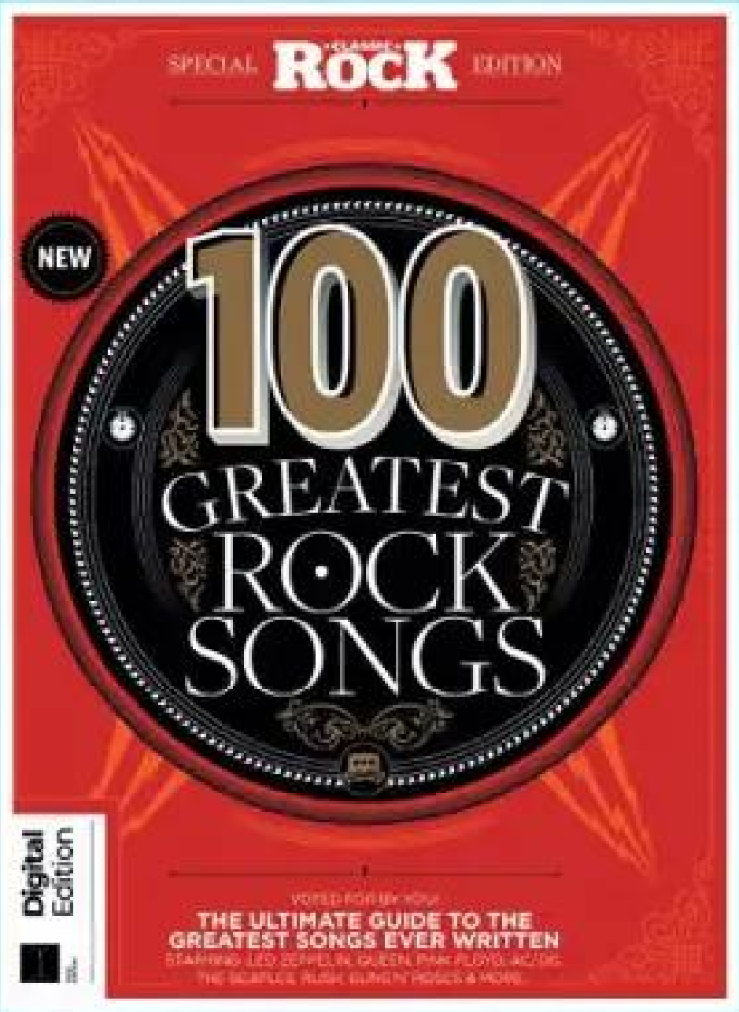
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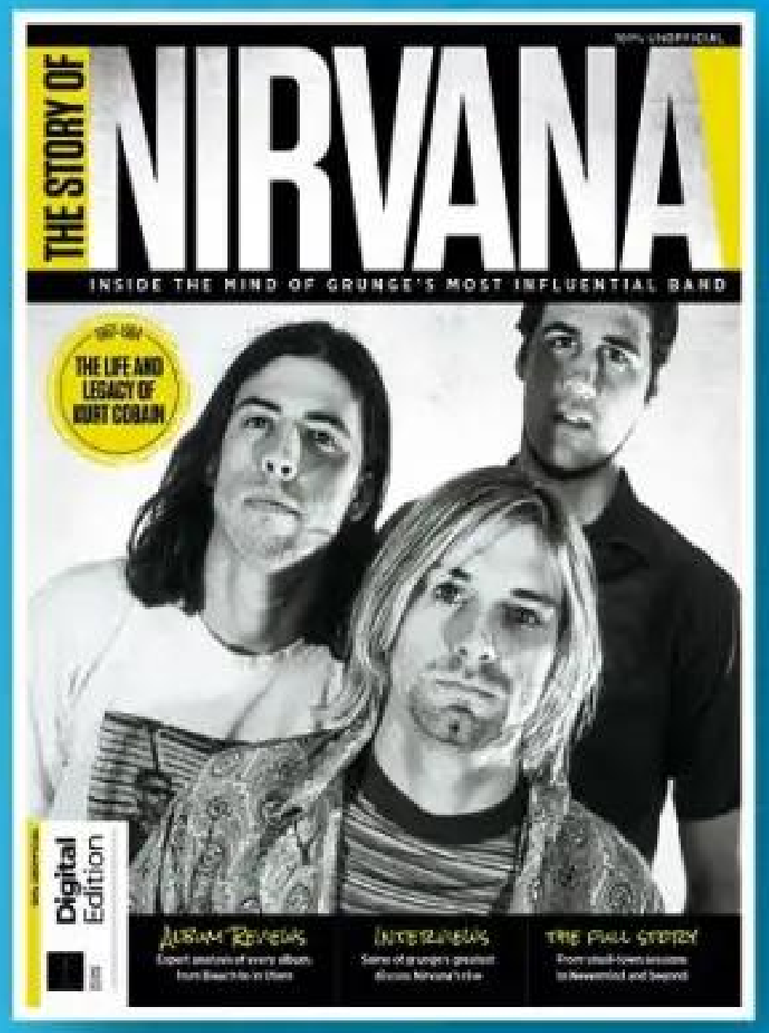
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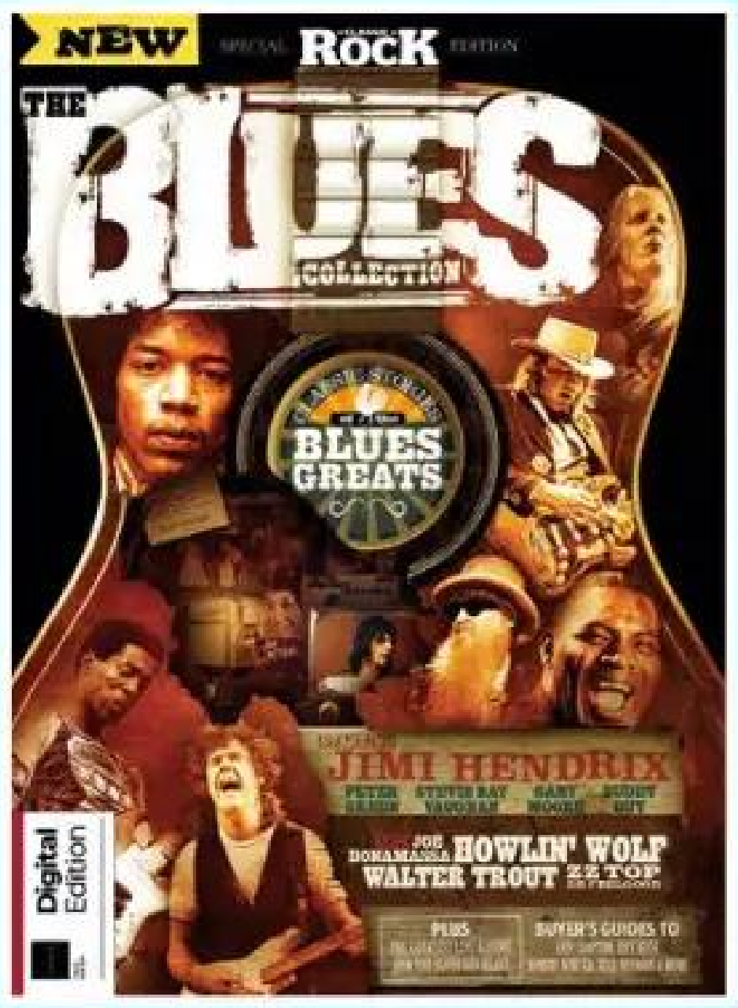
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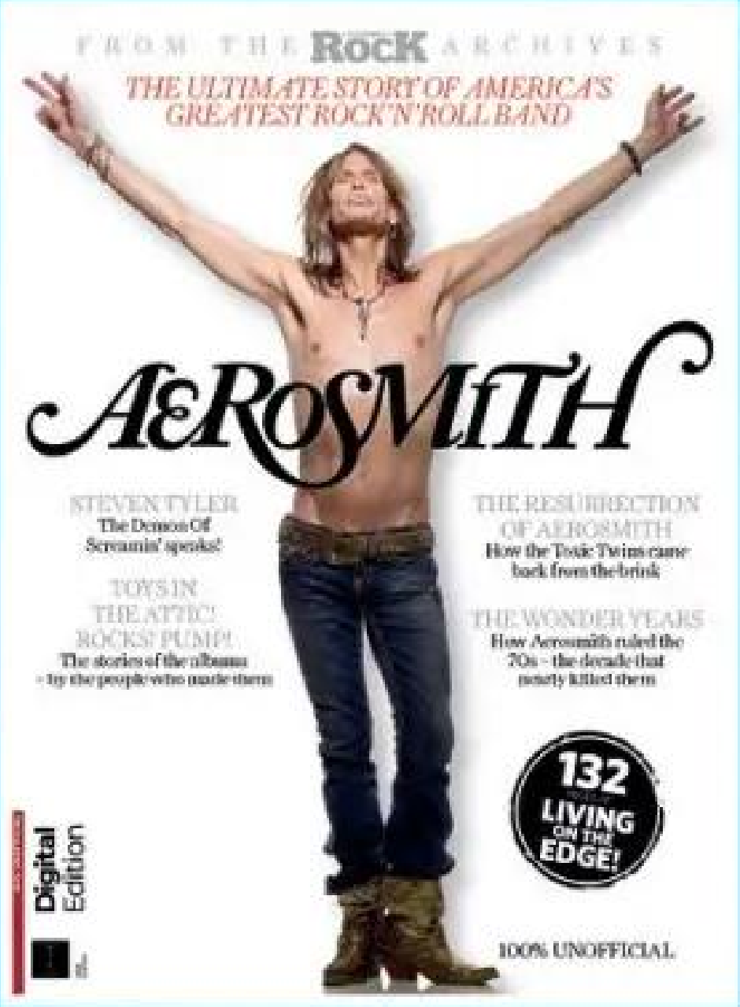

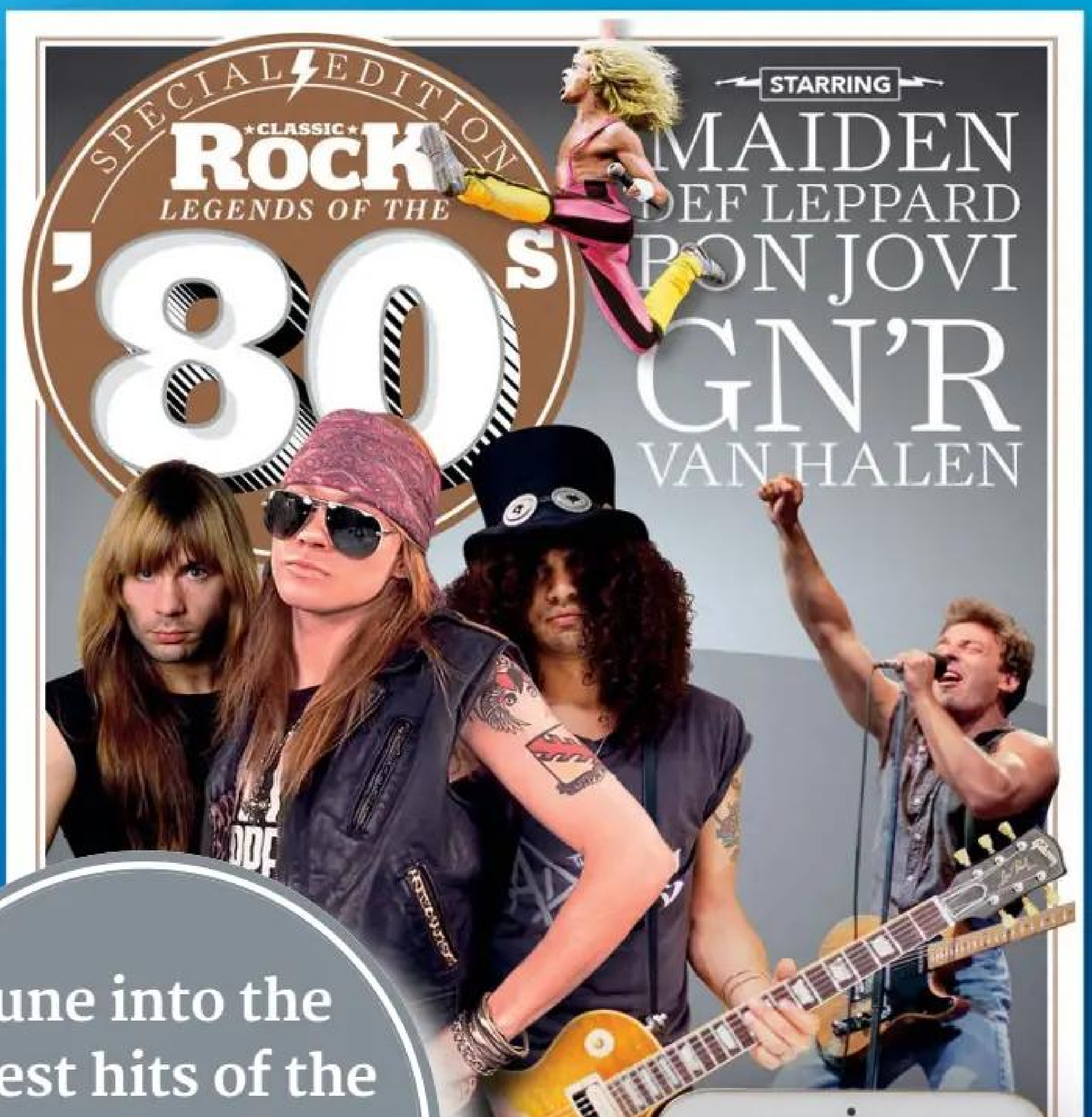
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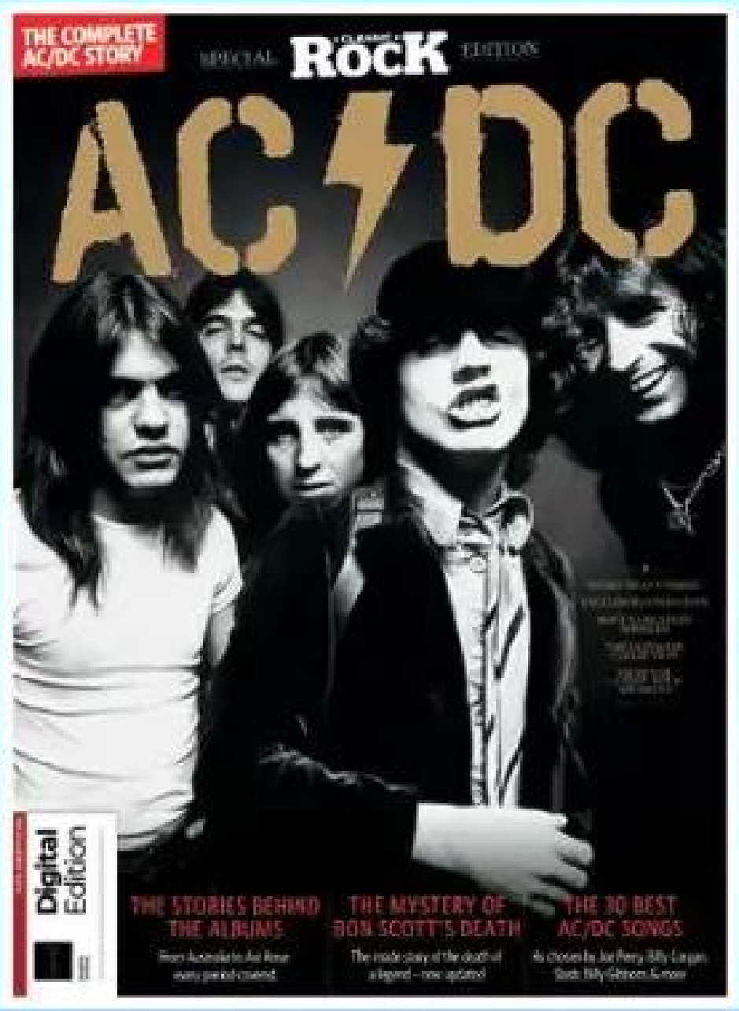

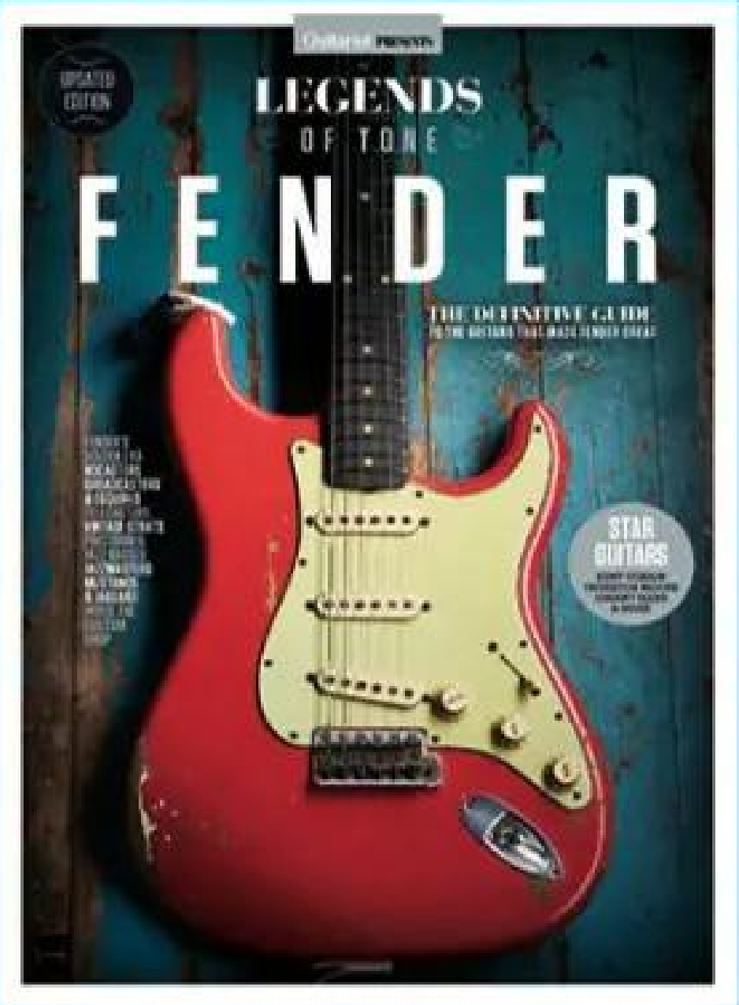
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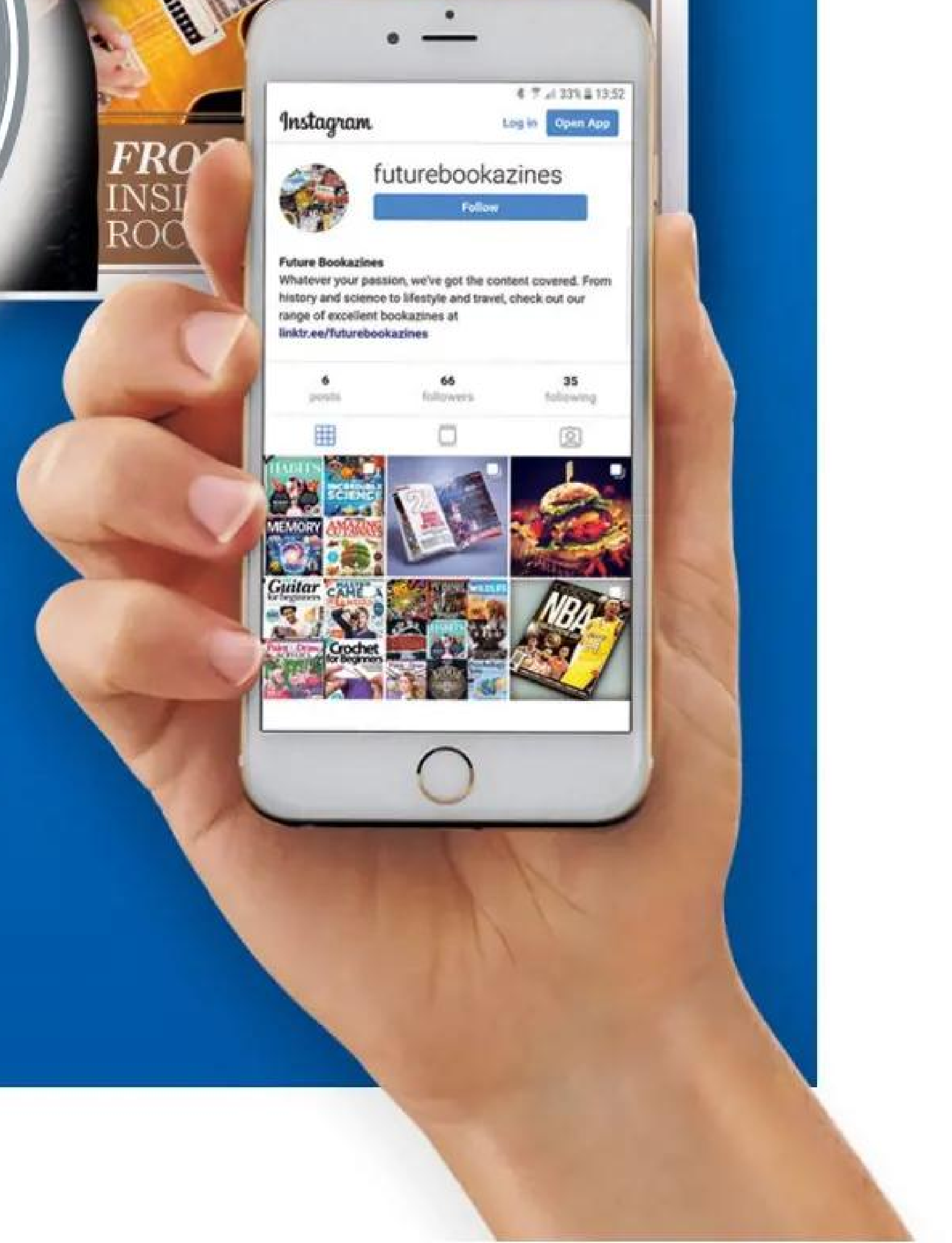
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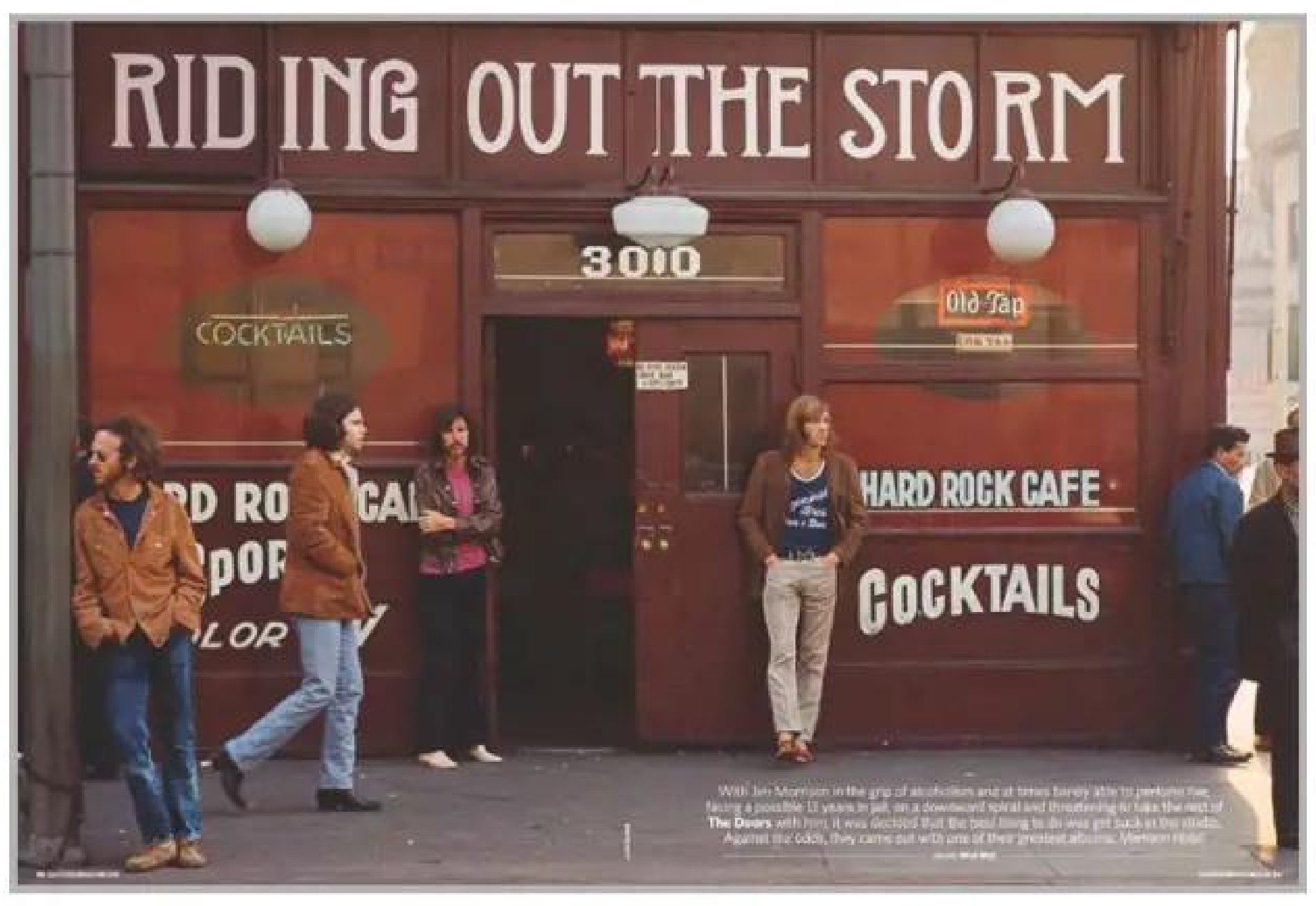

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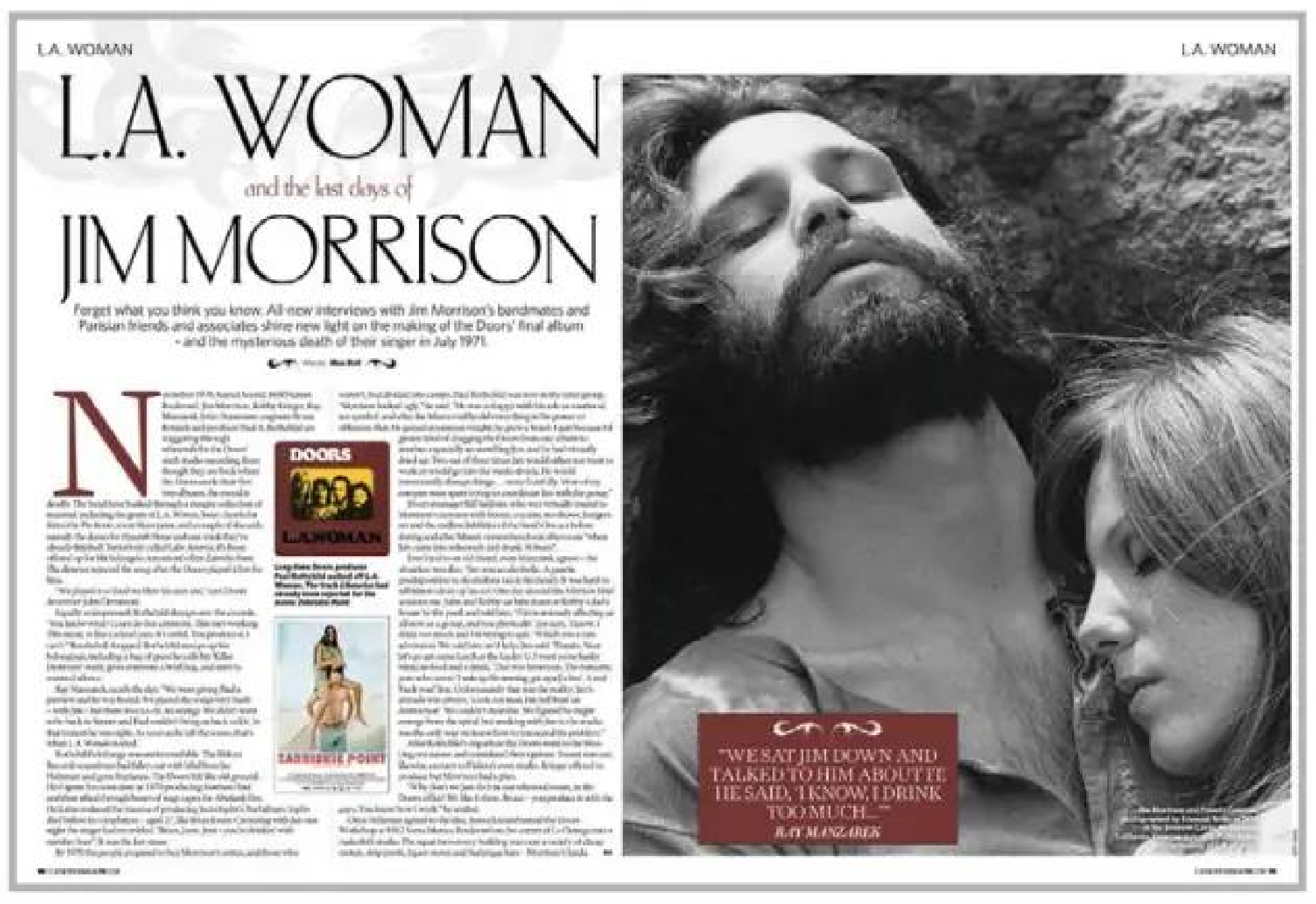

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